

BYZANTIUM IN SOUTH ARABIA

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In Memoriam

INTRODUCTION

IN the first quarter of the sixth century South Arabia, the *Arabia Felix* of the classical historians, was convulsed by some extraordinary events, including persecutions and martyrdoms, in which both religion and politics were entangled. It was what may be described as the struggle for Arabia between Judaism and Christianity, in which Byzantium and Ethiopia were directly involved. *Ca.* 520 Byzantium's ally, the Ethiopian Negus Ella-Asbeha, who assumed the biblical name Caleb, led an amphibious expedition across the Red Sea, landed in South Arabia, and vanquished the Judaizing king of Ḥimyar, who had assumed the biblical name Yūsuf (Joseph). In so doing, Caleb destroyed a kingdom of great antiquity—that of the Ḥimyarites of South Arabia which had endured for some six centuries—and secured an Ethiopian presence in South Arabia for at least some fifty years. His amphibious operation would not have been possible without the cooperation of Byzantium, for it was a Byzantine fleet that transported the Ethiopian army across the Red Sea. This joint Ethiopian-Byzantine military effort was the cornerstone of relations between the two powers in the sixth century. During these years Ethiopia remained Byzantium's staunch ally in the Afro-Arabian regions and also in the Red Sea area, which, with the conquest of South Arabia and its subsequent Christianization, became virtually a Christian lake and a sphere of influence for Byzantium, until the situation dramatically changed in 572 with the Persian occupation of South Arabia.¹

The military involvement of Byzantium in the affairs of South Arabia ceased with this conquest, and its *mission civilisatrice* began shortly thereafter. This mission was accomplished through the organization of the new South Arabian episcopate and the thorough Christianization of the newly conquered territory. The main sources for the conquest—the Greek *Martyrium Arethae* and the Syriac *Book of the Himyarites*—naturally treat this sequel summarily, and the only source that treats it extensively is the Greek *Vita Sancti Gregentii*. The recovery of the cultural history of South Arabia as a new ecclesiastical province in the sixth century must, therefore, depend on

* Warm thanks are due to Professor Albert Jamme, W. F. of the Catholic University of America, for drawing the map of South Arabia, and to Dr. Abdullah H. Masry, Director of the Department of Antiquities and Museums in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for permission to reproduce the three plates from the Department's publication, *An Introduction to Saudi Arabian Antiquities*.

¹ For pre-Islamic Arabia, see I. Shahīd, in *Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge, 1970), I, 3–29.

² For the text of *Letter S*, see *The Letter of Simeon of Bēth-Arshām*, ed. and trans. I. Guidi (Rome, 1881); for that of the newly discovered *Letter G*, see I. Shahīd, *The Martyrs of Najrān*, SubsHag, 49 (Brussels, 1971), 17–111 (hereafter *Martyrs*); *The Book of the Himyarites*, ed. and trans. A. Moberg (Lund, 1924) (hereafter *Book*). Of the relevant Sabaic inscriptions, two were published by G. Ryckmans, in *Le Muséon*, 66 (1953), 284–95, 295–303, and one by A. Jamme, in *Sabaeen and Hasaeen Inscriptions from Saudi Arabia* (Rome, 1966), 39–42; all three involve the Ḥimyarite King Yūsuf. The Ethiopic inscription of Caleb in South Arabia was published by M. Kamil, in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 9 (1964), 56–57. For more concerning these and related documents, see Shahīd, *Martyrs*.

the accounts of this *Vita*. The unsatisfactory state of the sources for the cultural history of South Arabia at the beginning of this century discouraged scholars from taking seriously the *Vita* and other related sources, including the *Martyrium Arethae* itself. But important discoveries of primary sources since then have changed the status of these hagiographic works. These discoveries consist of the Syriac *Book of the Himyarites*, the two letters of Bishop Simeon of Bêth-Arshâm (hereafter *Letter S* and *Letter G*), and a group of Sabaic and Ethiopic inscriptions involving both the Negus Caleb and the Himyarite King Yûsuf.² These incontestably reliable primary sources, hailing from the world of *Oriens Christianus*, have demonstrated the essential reliability of the *Martyrium Arethae* in general and in detail; the status of this source as reliable was also strengthened a few years ago with the appearance of *The Martyrs of Najrân*.³ The work of reexamining other related sources has continued since then, and the major work of Ethiopic literature, the *Kebra Nagast*, has also been studied, resulting in some significant conclusions for Byzantinists.⁴ It has been argued that the legend of the Last Roman King goes back ultimately not to a Syriac work of the eighth century but to an Ethiopic apocalypse, which is what the *Kebra Nagast* partly is, and that this work, the masterpiece of Ethiopic literature, is not a late medieval work but belongs in its original form to early medieval times, to the world of the sixth century, during which took place the events of the Ethiopian-Himyarite conflict involving the Byzantine Emperor Justin I, the Ethiopian Negus Caleb, and the South Arabian King Yûsuf.

The fruitfulness of this return to the *Kebra Nagast* and of its thorough reexamination in the light of the discovery of these new primary sources calls for a return to the *Vita Sancti Gregentii*, the study of which should prove even more fruitful than that of the Ethiopic epic since, compared to the *Vita*, the *Kebra Nagast* is mostly a legendary work. The *Vita* has long been viewed with suspicion, and rightly so, in view of the unavailability of reliable primary sources with which its accounts could be checked; but as the picture has now completely changed,⁵ the return to the *Vita* is imperative and, as will be seen in the course of this study, extremely rewarding.

The *Vita* is a very large work; inevitably, only a small part of it can be examined in this study—namely, the immediate sequel of the Ethiopian conquest—and the emphasis will be on drawing the ecclesiastical map of South Arabia in the first quarter of the sixth century through the recovery of the names of the main centers of Christianity and those of the churches erected in them. The list of churches is related to St. Gregentius' itinerary in Ethiopia and Arabia, and this, too, will be examined. The intensive *Quellenforschung* to which this part of the *Vita* has been subjected reveals a Syriac original for

² In 1971 (see preceding note). For the *Martyrium Arethae*, see the chapter in *Martyrs*, 200–31; the standard edition is that of E. Carpentier, in *ActaSS*, Octobris X (1861), 721–759 (hereafter *Martyrium Arethae*).

⁴ See I. Shahîd, "The Kebra Nagast in the Light of New Researches," *Le Muséon*, 89 (1976), 133–78 (hereafter "Kebra Nagast"); see also *Martyrs*, 179 note 3, 230 note 1.

⁵ See *Letter G*, in *Martyrs*, 17–111.

the *Vita* and possibly an Arabic one as well. All future studies on the *Vita* must recognize this fact as the key to solving many of the cruxes in the text, and less conservative scholars than the present writer will most probably accept more of the *Vita* than has been the case in this study.

Although the main concern of this study is the churches of South Arabia erected or restored by Caleb, some attention must be paid to the builder of these churches himself, Caleb, a negus who became a saint of the Universal Church and has remained until the present day a saint of the Eastern Church, especially the Monophysite.⁶ A section of this study will, therefore, examine what the *Vita* has to say on Caleb's role in Arabia as an idoloclast, as an evangelist, and as the initiator of the cult of the Martyrs of Najrân. The *Vita* is also informative on the post-Arabian phase, which began when Caleb returned to Ethiopia after his crusade. It was in this phase that Abraha, one of the Ethiopians Caleb left behind in South Arabia, rebelled against his authority and finally succeeded in asserting his independence, thus depriving Caleb of his South Arabian domain. Although Abraha kept Arabia in the Byzantine camp for a long time, his rebellion did create complications for Ethiopian-Byzantine relations, and finally brought about in 572 the Persian occupation of the country and the turn of the tide against Byzantium. What the *Vita* has to say on this post-Arabian period is, therefore, reexamined, completing the drawing of the picture of Caleb as a medieval knight-errant, the St. Louis of the Christian Semitic Orient.

Some attention must be paid not only to the builder of the South Arabian churches but also to the one who consecrated them, the bishop who presided over the organization of the new ecclesiastical province. He had been requested by Caleb from the Emperor Justin and had been consecrated by the patriarch of Alexandria, Timotheus. His fortunes as well as his name are shrouded in obscurity. The *Vita* alone gives him a name, Gregentius, and makes him a Chalcedonian. This has caused students of the *Vita* to question its authenticity because, *inter alia*, it is certain that Gregentius was not a Chalcedonian but a Monophysite. However, as this study will indicate, the rebel Abraha most probably changed the ecclesiastical affiliation of South Arabia from Monophysite to Chalcedonian, and the *Vita* may just have preserved echoes of the dispatch of a Chalcedonian bishop to South Arabia during the reign of Abraha, or may have antedated the dispatch of such a bishop from the reign of Abraha to that of his Monophysite predecessor. It would be pleasant if the *Vita* preserved his name (possibly a corruption of George or Gregory), and if his name could be added to the episcopal list of South Arabia together with such well-attested names as Paul I, Paul II, and Sylvanus. However, for the time being he must remain anonymous, but whoever he was and whatever his name, he wrote an important chapter in the history of the South Arabian episcopate.

Of all the cities of South Arabia Najrân holds first place in the history of

⁶ On Caleb as St. Ellesboan, see *DHGE*, XV, cols. 135-43.

the events that convulsed the country in the first quarter of the sixth century. It became the Arabian *martyropolis*, and its ruler, Arethas, became a saint⁷ whose name the well-known *Martyrium Arethae* commemorates. Najrân is, therefore, well remembered in the Greek sources, both the *Martyrium Arethae* and the *Vita*, but, since it was an Arab city in a largely Sabaeans and Himyarite South Arabia, it is understandably remembered best in the Arabic sources, which thus are the most informative on the city and its Christian monuments.^{7a} Furthermore, Najrân's influence as the Holy City of the Arabs was persuasive in the Arabian peninsula, and it also reached out to the Fertile Crescent, whither the Arabs of Najrân emigrated in the seventh century, where they founded a few Christian colonies of which two, possibly three, bore its name, and where they built churches, also mentioned in the Arabic sources. Art historians are not fully aware of South Arabia and its Christian monuments, but the list of churches, recovered from the *Vita* and the *ekphraseis* of the Arabic sources, short and incidental as they are, might draw their attention to this almost forgotten province. South Arabia was a country of martyrs in the sixth century; the cult of its martyrs and their relics distinguished South Arabian Christianity and its religious architecture, and it undoubtedly explains the rise of so many *martyria* on the ecclesiastical skyline of the Semitic Near East, a matter of some significance to the art historian of the Byzantine limitrophe.

As has been indicated in the introduction, the main theme of this study is the Christian churches of South Arabia in the early sixth century and the extraction of other relevant data from the *Vita* and the Arabic sources. The existence of Christian churches in that region could be safely predicated without the testimony of the *Vita*; the country had witnessed a religious war, and the subsequent occupation of the country by a zealous crusader, who was determined to avenge the death of his martyred coreligionists and to restore the faith, would most certainly have been attended by the rise of Christian edifices of all descriptions in South Arabia. Aided by these incontestable facts of history, one could scan the South Arabian region and draw its ecclesiastical map, positing the existence of Christian edifices in this or that city. But this ecclesiastical cartography, justified as it might be, would remain hypothetical and unsatisfactory since it would lack the support of specific names of locations and dedications, names which alone would have the power to evoke, with their definiteness and particularism, the image of the South Arabian episcopate in the sixth century. This is precisely the area where the *Vita* fills in the vacuum in the ecclesiastical landscape. Its concise but most valuable *onomasticon* illuminates the opaque map of South Arabia with a string of names which supplies that toponymic dimension which had been missing in the ecclesiastical map of the region. Ecclesiastical cartography is thus advanced as the three major centers of Christianity in the South Arabian episcopate emerge with the names of their churches (fig. A):

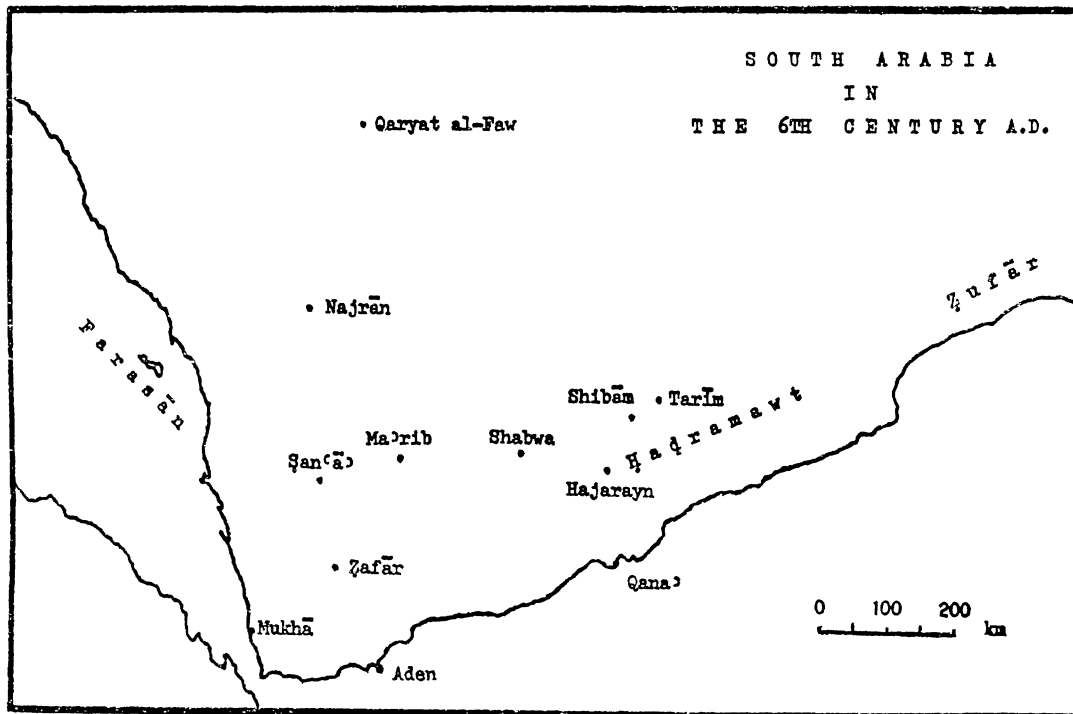
⁷ On St. Arethas, see *DHGE*, III, cols. 1650–53.

^{7a} For the ruins of Christian Najrân, see plates 1–3.

1. Zafâr, the capital of Ḥimyar, with its three churches: the Great Church of the Holy Trinity; the Church of the Holy Mother of God; and the Church of the Holy Apostles.

2. Najrân, the Arabian *martyropolis*, with its three churches: the Church of Jesus Christ of the Life-giving Resurrection; the Church of the Holy Mother of God; and the Church of the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas.

3. Qâna', the main seaport of South Arabia facing the Indian Ocean, with its three churches: the Church of the Ascension; the Church of John, the Forerunner; and the Church of the Apostle Thomas.



A.

The toponymic dimension is fortunately supplemented by a topographic one, which sheds more realism and gives precision by the details it supplies on the location of these churches within the various South Arabian cities. The most graphic of these details is the incidental notice in the *Vita*, supplemented by other sources on the church in Najrân, dedicated to the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas. According to these sources, that memorial temple was built on a site that had previously bloomed as a luxuriant garden, near which a lonely tamarisk tree had stood, not far from the northern gate of the city which looked toward Jerusalem.

PART ONE: *VITA SANCTI GREGENTII*

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

In this section it is not proposed to examine the *Vita*⁸ in its entirety, including the works associated with St. Gregentius, namely, the *Dialogus* and the *Leges*; the chief concern here is the list of churches in the *Vita*, the building of which is ascribed to the Ethiopian Negus Caleb, and the consecration to St. Gregentius. A few preliminary remarks on the *Corpus Gregentianum*,⁹ however, are not unjustifiable as an introduction to the intensive study of the list of churches, the authenticity of which can be accepted.

The *Vita* has been under a cloud for more than half a century.¹⁰ The most recent advocate of its spuriousness has been Evelyne Patlagean.¹¹ In an article that appeared in 1964,¹² this authoress examined a series of hagiographic texts and argued that these *Vitae* were written by Greek monks in Italy in the eighth and ninth centuries, that they have no claims to authenticity, and that their composition was inspired by a desire to support the thesis of the primacy of the Roman See.

Within this hagiographic series two *Vitae* are paired together, that of Gregentius, the bishop of Zafâr in sixth-century South Arabia, and that of Gregorios, the bishop of Agrigentum in Sicily. Miss Patlagean has argued that a striking relationship obtains between these two *Vitae* and that both were written from the point of view of the Roman see.

Much of what Miss Patlagean says concerning these two *Vitae* must be accepted. As far as the *Vita* is concerned, it is certain that the bishop, consecrated for the newly conquered South Arabia, was not called Gregentius, that he did not hail from the Occident but from the Orient, and that he was a

⁸ *BHG*, I, 228–29; the *Vita* has been published in part by A. Vasiliev, with an introduction and a Russian translation, in *VizVrem*, 14 (1907), 23–67 (hereafter *Vita*). For a bibliography on the *Vita*, see A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, DOS, 1 (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), 16–17, 298–99. The *Leges* and the *Dialogus* have been published in PG, 86, cols. 567–784 (hereafter *Leges* and *Dialogus*).

⁹ Strictly speaking, the *Dialogus* and the *Leges* are part of the *Vita*, although they have been published and studied separately.

¹⁰ Perhaps the earliest of those who questioned its authenticity was P. Peeters, in *AnalBoll*, 31 (1912), 108–9.

¹¹ If there has been a more recent one, the fact is unknown to me.

¹² See “Les moines grecs d’Italie et l’apologie des thèses pontificales (VIII–IX siècles),” *StM*, 5 (1954), 579–602. The article may be consulted with profit for bibliographical orientation on the *Vita*; see also her conclusions on the *Leges* and *Dialogus*, together with a reference to the views of A. D’Emilia and N. Pigulevskaia, on pp. 593 and 601. Concerning the *Leges*, see also J. B. Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire* (New York, 1958), II, 327, 412–13.

This introductory section does not treat the problem of the sources of the *Vita*. But, as Miss Patlagean discusses them, especially the relation of the *Vita* to the *Martyrium Arethae* (*ibid.*, 599–600), the following comments may be made. The two works indeed overlap in such matters as the description of Caleb’s choice of a Christian king for the Himyarites and of his church-building activity. But the list of churches in the *Vita* and the toponymy suggest that the hagiographer had before him not the *Martyrium Arethae* but a different document. In any case, the *Martyrium Arethae* could not have been a major source for the writer of the *Vita*, since, with the exception of the overlapping noted above, the latter takes up the ecclesiastical history of South Arabia where the former leaves off. What the sources of the *Vita* were remains an open question, but, as will be indicated in the treatment of its toponymy (*infra*, Appendix III), one of them must have been ultimately a Syriac source, whose archetype was perhaps an Arabic one.

Monophysite, not an Orthodox Chalcedonian. It is also probable that the first part of the *Vita*, which sets the scene in the Mediterranean region and describes the fortunes of Gregentius, is fictitious. This much can be conceded to Miss Patlagean. The rest of her conclusions, namely, that the Arabian part of the *Vita* is as fictitious as the Mediterranean one, cannot be accepted. It will therefore be argued that the *Vita* consists of two recognizably distinct parts, the Mediterranean and the Arabian, and that the first is fictitious but the second is not necessarily so, once it is relieved of the ghost of Gregentius which has haunted it, of the legendary framework imposed on it, and of a few miraculous elements with which the hagiographer has embroidered it. The disengagement of the Arabian part of the *Vita* from these three elements is the first step toward the profitable study of this section. Once this is done, the study of the Arabian part of the *Vita* contributes substantially to the ecclesiastical history of South Arabia in the sixth century; for it can be argued that the hagiographer had at his disposal documents pertaining to the South Arabian ecclesiastical scene other than the *Martyrium Arethae*. These documents the hagiographer incorporated within the framework of a *Vita*, the palpably legendary character of which has thus operated to the disadvantage of these documents after they had been framed in the new legendary context. There are three items in the Arabian part of the *Vita* which advance ecclesiastical history: 1. a list of churches with their names and the localities wherein they were erected, which is a handsome addition to our knowledge of the ecclesiastical map of South Arabia; 2. the *Leges*, a code of laws, the so-called Laws of the Himyarites; and 3. the *Dialogus*, a dialogue between a Christian bishop and a Jewish rabbi. It will be argued that the list of churches is authentic, while the *Dialogus* and the *Leges* cannot be condemned as spurious without further ado or right of appeal, and that they have to be at least approached with an open mind for what they purport to be.¹³

The *Dialogus*

This is the least valuable of the three items referred to above, since it is a theoretical discussion involving the well-known positions of the two biblical religions, and it adds little to our knowledge of the religious scene in sixth-century Arabia. However, it has been a target for those who argued against the authenticity of the *Vita* and therefore it deserves a few comments.

1. There is no intrinsic impossibility or even improbability in holding a dialogue¹⁴ between a Christian bishop and a Jewish rabbi in South Arabia. That country had become one of the main centers of Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian Era, especially during the reigns of its Judaizing kings, and interfaith controversies and dialogues must have taken place there after the introduction of Christianity. Traces of such dialogues and controversies

¹³ I suspend judgment on the authenticity of the *Dialogus* and the *Leges*.

¹⁴ Or perhaps a colloquy which could have been later elaborated into a formal dialogue. Even if fictitious, its composition does remain of some interest as a reflection of the type of concerns and controversies that engaged the theological mind of Byzantium.

are easily deducible from the account that describes the mission of Theophilus Indus, the Arian bishop, to the court of the South Arabian king during the reign of Constantius;¹⁵ dialogues between Yûsuf, the last Judaizing king of South Arabia, and the Christians of Najrân are explicitly attested in that primary source, the sixth-century *Book*.¹⁶ Interfaith sessions of the kind described in the *Vita* thus seem to have been a feature of the religious life of the Semitic Orient. It is, therefore, perfectly possible that a dialogue such as the one included in the *Vita* did take place, sometime in the sixth century, perhaps not immediately after the Ethiopian conquest of South Arabia, but a little later in the century under the possibly more tolerant rule of Abraha.¹⁷

2. Three features of the *Dialogus* disinclined students of the *Vita* to accept its authenticity: its inordinate length and formal character, its strongly Orthodox tone, and the miraculous elements at its conclusion. All these difficulties can be negotiated; the hagiographer, true to his art, amplified inordinately what may have been a short account in a South Arabian document at his disposal, added the miraculous element, which is a regular feature of such compositions,¹⁸ and, if he was writing in Rome or somewhere in Orthodox Byzantium, he naturally gave the theology in the *Dialogus* a strong Chalcedonian complexion in much the same way that the author of the *Martyrium Arethae* did.

The last point on the Orthodoxy of the *Dialogus*' theology deserves a further comment since this had been one of the arguments against its authenticity, in view of the fact that South Arabia had become predominantly Monophysite, not Chalcedonian, after the Ethiopian conquest. On the other hand, it is possible that South Arabia later in the sixth century under Abraha changed its ecclesiastical affiliation. A. G. Lundin and A. F. L. Beeston have argued for Abraha's shift to the Chalcedonian and Nestorian positions respectively.¹⁹ Such advances in the study of the ecclesiastical history of South Arabia became possible only after important epigraphic discoveries had been made. H. Grégoire, who wrote his well-known study in 1930,²⁰ before these discoveries, contended against the authenticity of the *Corpus Gregentianum*: his study loses much of its force as a result of these advances, and also as a result of the possibility that South Arabia under Abraha might have had two ecclesiastical hierarchies—Chalcedonian and Monophysite.²¹ If so, the Orthodoxy of the *Dialogus* ceases to be an argument against its authenticity.²²

¹⁵ Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* III.4, ed. J. Bidez, GCS, 21 (Leipzig, 1913), 32–34.

¹⁶ *Book*, 13a.

¹⁷ *Infra* and note 19.

¹⁸ What has been said about the miraculous in connection with the *Martyrium Arethae* may be said with equal truth of the *Vita*; see *Martyrs*, 215–18.

¹⁹ A. Lundin, *Juznaja Aravija v VI veke*, Palestinskij Sbornik, 8 (71) (1961), 63, 121–22; A. Beeston, "Abraha," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden-London, 1960), I, 102.

²⁰ H. Grégoire, "Mahomet et le Monophysisme," in *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, I (Paris, 1930), 107–19.

²¹ *Infra*, note 42.

²² Those who wish to argue for the authenticity of the *Dialogus* may find the two following observations to be of some relevance: first, in his dialogue with St. Gregentius, the Jewish rabbi (Herban) makes frequent reference to the Return of the Chosen People to the Promised Land, and this could reflect a local tradition in the South Arabia of the sixth century; on this, see "Kebra Nagast," 148–49. Second, St. Gregentius urges Herban to go and see for himself the utter destruction of the Temple

The *Leges*

Much more important than the *Dialogus* are the *Leges*, supposed to have been given to the Ḥimyarites sometime after the successful Ethiopian invasion of South Arabia; their authenticity, too, seems based on a stronger foundation.

1. The historical context called for the promulgation of a code of laws. The Ethiopian expedition against South Arabia was not only a military effort to conquer South Arabia; it was indeed a veritable crusade. The victor, a zealous Christian ruler, could very well have been concerned about the laws which would regulate the life of the people he recently had converted to Christianity, especially since Judaism, against which he had waged his crusade, must have established its own laws in South Arabia.²³ As an Ethiopian king with a special relationship to the religion of the Old Testament, his contribution would not have been so much the suspension of these laws as the introduction of new ones, which represented the ideals and the institutions of the faith he was propagating in the territory he was so conscious of having conquered under the sign of the Cross. The conversion of a new people to Christianity could easily have entailed the introduction of an appropriate new code.

This argument may be supported by some evidence from the sources—the *Vita* and the *Book*. The *Vita* relates that Caleb wrote to the patriarch of Alexandria, asking him to send a bishop for the newly conquered territory, and specifying that he should be well versed in both the Old and New Testaments.²⁴ Although Caleb's request for a bishop of these particular attainments admits of other interpretations, the most plausible one could be related to this very problem, namely, the desirability of giving a new code of laws to a recently Christianized community with a very strong admixture of Jews and converted Jews, and, indeed, the *Leges* betray the influence of Old Testament laws.

More important than the *Vita* is the *Book*, which, unlike the *Vita*, whose authenticity has not yet been established, is a primary source of the first importance. The *Book* relates that, before he left Ethiopia, Caleb had consulted his bishop, Euprepus, on what to do with those Ḥimyarites who had apostatized (p. 55a–b). This clearly indicates that the Ethiopian king, apparently confident of victory, had attended to such matters as the status of the apostates even before he left Ethiopia. If so, he could have been concerned also about the laws which should govern the conduct of the prospective Christian population of South Arabia. A phrase in the *Book* used by Bishop Euprepus

of Solomon in Jerusalem (πορεύθητι καὶ θέσσαι ὅτι κατέσκαπται) (*Dialogus*, col. 729C). The Temple Area (Ḥaram) lay in ruins in the sixth and seventh centuries, but this was not the case after A.D. 691 when the Dome of the Rock was built on the site, to be followed by the Aqṣā Mosque. Gregentius may, of course, have been thinking of the Temple itself and not of the Sacred Area, and consequently the above quotation from the *Dialogus* would not argue for its having been written in pre-Islamic times; even so, the quotation would make more sense if dated to the pre-Islamic rather than to the Islamic period, when the Ḥaram presented the aspect of a splendidly built area, not of a ruined one; furthermore, the exhortation that Herban should go and see for himself, coming as it does from a Christian interlocutor, suggests that the Holy Land was still in Christian hands.

²³ See *Letter S*, 507 lines 2–6.

²⁴ *Vita*, 61.

about the Ḥimyarites is highly significant and relevant in this connection, namely, that the Ḥimyarites are "barbarians" (*Book*, 55b). If this was the Ethiopians' conception of their transmarine cousins across the Gate of Lamentation, then their king, whose crusade involved also a civilizing mission in the land of the Queen of Sheba, could very well have thought that the Ḥimyarites needed a new code of laws.²⁵

2. Even if Caleb had no part in the promulgation of these laws, the general social and moral conditions in South Arabia after the convulsions of civil and international wars in which the country was involved could argue for the initiation of such legislative efforts, and the few references involving Caleb, cited above in the *Book*, afford some evidence for this view. Indeed, of the two works attributed to St. Gregentius, the *Leges* and the *Dialogus*, the authenticity of the former is easier to defend than the latter. The *Dialogus* may be considered as belonging to a well-known genre and could have been written in conformity with its conventions. It would be difficult to conceive of the *Leges* as having been written within a similar framework. Their curious mixture of pedestrianism, stringency, and local color²⁶ would argue for their authenticity. These laws evoke the South Arabian scene well. They presuppose a highly urban society such as that of South Arabia, a social and moral degeneration such as beset this unhappy country at that juncture, and a social and economic structure such as South Arabia possessed; finally, there is the tone of the Old Testament legislation, especially relevant to a people like the South Arabians who had been ruled by Judaizing kings just before the conquest of the country by the Ethiopians, whose own laws even to the present day betray a very strong Old Testament influence.

3. Finally, there is the onomastic argument. In the *Leges* (col. 569) the name of the Christian Ḥimyarite king, set up by Caleb, is Abraam, while the correct sequence of rulers, following incontestable epigraphic and secular sources, must be Sumayfa' (Esimaphaeus)-Abraha (Abraam). A possible solution to the puzzle has been found in connection with the *Martyrium Arethae*, where the same problem is posed and where it has been argued that Sumayfa' adopted for his baptismal name the biblical name Abraham.²⁷ Therefore, the *Leges* could simply have used the new baptismal name of the Ḥimyarite king rather than his old pagan name. The onomastic argument cannot, therefore, be used against the *Leges*. After all, the work may turn out to be fictitious,

²⁵ It is not entirely clear when these Laws were supposed to have been given to the Ḥimyarites, whether shortly after the Ethiopian occupation during the reign of Abraham, the newly appointed king of Ḥimyar, or at some later date during the reign of Abraha. The hagiographer's account indicates that they were promulgated shortly after Caleb's return to Ethiopia by St. Gregentius, who served the newly appointed King Abraham as his bishop. Caleb possibly inspired their promulgation or, at least, must have taken part in these legal reforms, in view of the thoroughness with which he supervised the conversion of the country during his seven-month stay after the landing, and in view of the fact that it was he who had asked the patriarch of Alexandria to send him a bishop for South Arabia.

²⁶ Bury, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 12), II, 327, 412-13. Since Miss Patlagean wrote, A. K. Irvine has written in favor of their authenticity; see "Homicide in Pre-Islamic South Arabia," *BSOAS*, 30 (1967), 277-91, and Addenda by A. F. L. Beeston, *ibid.*, 291-92, esp. 290-91. For law in ancient South Arabia, see A. Grohmann, *Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orient* (Munich, 1963), 132-40.

²⁷ *Martyrs*, 228-30.

but if it does, it will not be so because of the onomastic difficulty, since this has been shown to be perfectly negotiable. Even if the Abraam mentioned in the *Leges* should be identified with the later ruler, Abraha,²⁸ and not with the earlier Abraham, this will not necessarily affect the authenticity of the document: it will, however, create new problems, namely, those of chronology and attribution. It could suggest that the hagiographer wrote in the second half of the sixth century, shortly after the death of Abraha, and, in the process of rewriting the history of South Arabia in that century, committed an error, partly chronological, which made it seem as though Abraha had become the ruler of the country immediately after the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia. It is not difficult to see how this could have happened. Writing at some time in the second half of the sixth century, when South Arabia under the rule of Abraha and his sons might have leaned toward the Byzantine Chalcedonian position or might actually have become so in its ecclesiastical affiliation, the hagiographer assumed that this affiliation had obtained ever since Caleb conquered South Arabia, and this assumption would have been unwittingly fortified by the similar names of the two rulers, Abraham and Abraha.

The List of Churches

Although judgment on the authenticity of the *Leges* and the *Dialogus* must remain suspended pending a thorough study based on a critically edited text, a part of the *Vita* can be examined separately even before the appearance of the desiderated critical edition of the *Vita* in its entirety; i.e., the chapter which might be considered an *amplificatio* on section 38 of the *Martyrium Arethae*,²⁹ and which describes the churches built by Caleb in South Arabia and consecrated by St. Gregentius.³⁰ Whether it was St. Gregentius or some other bishop who consecrated these churches is of no importance in a study of Caleb and of his role as a church builder. Perhaps St. Gregentius never set foot on South Arabian soil, having been dispatched thither only in the imagination of the author of the *Vita*, a matter more relevant to St. Gregentius than to Caleb. What is relevant and valuable is that particular account in the *Vita* which records the number and name of the churches built in the various South Arabian cities, an account that seems authentic on several grounds. As such it retains its importance as a valuable list of South Arabian churches in

²⁸ Since, according to the *Dialogus* (col. 781), he reigned for thirty years, which is much more true of the reign of Abraha than of Abraham.

²⁹ *Martyrs*, 226–30.

³⁰ Vasiliev did not, curiously enough, accord this part of the *Vita* the attention it fully deserves. This was particularly regrettable since, five years after the appearance of his edition of part of the *Vita*, Peeters, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 10), made some pertinent remarks on the topographical data which the *Vita* contains and which Vasiliev had thought could speak in favor of its authenticity. The part of the *Vita* which lists the churches and the cities is probably the most solid section of the whole work. Even 'Amalém, which Peeters relegated to the realm of fantasy, cannot be treated so cavalierly (see *infra*, Appendix III). The detailed analysis and examination of this problem in the following section will demonstrate how the *Vita*'s account of the topography and toponymy of South Arabia is not contradicted but confirmed by primary sources, not available to Peeters in 1912, and that this confirmation is of such a nature as to argue for the authenticity of the account.

the sixth century, even if the attribution of their consecration to St. Gregentius is erroneous, if the connection of St. Gregentius with Arabia is fictitious, or if St. Gregentius himself never existed.

Only the hypercritical would reject this account, once it is stripped to its essentials, namely, the erection of churches by a zealous crusader in a country, conquered under the banner of a universalistic religion seeking to propagate itself. External support is not lacking for this argument. The prime source, the *Book*, states that the king "went round among the towns of the land and performed what he had in his heart" (p. 53b), and that "the souls of the prophets rejoiced in the erecting of these churches, and the spirits of the apostles exulted at their true faith, and the bones of the holy martyrs were brought into them in triumph" (p. 54a). Again in the concluding chapter of Caleb's exploits, the *Book* states that the king "built many churches in the land, and appointed in them priests from those who were with him . . . and left notables of the Abyssinians to guard . . . also the churches that he had built" (p. 56a). Thus, this account provides the first and the most solid foundation for accepting the account of the *Vita*. Though much of the *Book* has been lost in transmission, the extant part, just quoted, does confirm the *Vita*'s accounts on two of the latter's important features; namely, that the churches were not few but many, and that they were distributed throughout the country, a conclusion confirmed likewise by the incidental testimony of Cosmas Indicopleustes on churches in those regions at that particular period.³¹

The testimony of the *Martyrium Arethae*, too, supports the *Vita*. Though its status as a reliable source falls between the *Book*, a primary source, and the *Vita*, which is viewed with much suspicion, the *Martyrium Arethae*'s essential credibility has been demonstrated, and therefore its testimony must be considered important in this context. It is particularly helpful here, since its accounts, based upon the *Book*, are more ample, confirming and supplementing the latter's description. It makes more specific what the *Book* relates in general terms. In so doing, it has also been selective; its author has chosen to record Caleb's buildings in only two of the most important places, namely, in the capital, Zafâr, and in the City of Martyrs, Najrân, both of which are mentioned in the *Vita*. Strong confirmatory evidence comes also from an entirely different and independent direction, that is, from the Arabic sources.³² This evidence is, of course, most valuable since it is not open to some of the objections which can be raised against the Christian Greek and Syriac sources, perhaps colored by differences in the doctrinal persuasion of their writers. On Najrân the Arabic sources have ample material which again confirms and supplements the *Vita*, but in a much more substantial fashion than the *Martyrium Arethae* does. Finally, there is the testimony of modern travelers who have left accounts of South Arabian sites and antiquities they have visited.³³

³¹ Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie Chrétienne*, ed. W. Wolska-Conus, SC, 141 (Paris, 1968), I, 505; note the reference to martyrs.

³² *Infra*, pp. 67-87.

³³ *Infra*, notes 176, 186, 191, 195.

Though the references to churches are scarce in these accounts, dealing as they do with a country which ceased to be Christian centuries ago and which is still difficult to explore, they are valuable additional evidence in support of the account of the *Vita*; this evidence is particularly welcome because of its nature and also its availability after the lapse of so many centuries since the erection of these churches.

These authentic records are the solid background against which the list of churches in the *Vita* can be comfortably set. They do not, of course, prove that the *Vita*'s list is a reliable historical document for the churches of South Arabia in the sixth century. Only the intensive examination of each and every item in the list can decide that question. This examination will be conducted in the following sections, and it will reveal that the hagiographer had before him a document on the South Arabian churches which was of the same degree of reliability as the one that the author of the *Martyrium Arethae* had at his disposal when listing the ships that Byzantium contributed to the South Arabian campaign.³⁴ The surest test of the list's authenticity is the significant topographic details, which the hagiographer included in his account of some of these churches and which can be verified by unquestionably reliable sixth-century sources on South Arabia. The test indicates that the list could derive only from a reliable source on the South Arabian scene, written by one who was in a position to supply such significant details, toponymic³⁵ as well as topographic.

The *Vita* is a composite work of various levels in which fact and fiction are intermingled, and the first task of the student of the *Vita* is to recognize this fact. One can then separate the list of churches from the fictional elements of the *Vita* and subject it to intensive examination, a project which has made possible the redrawing of the ecclesiastical map of the South Arabian episcopate in the early part of the sixth century.³⁶

³⁴ See T. Nöldeke's note on this list, *Die Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Leiden, 1879), 188. The list of churches, recorded in the *Vita*, recalls a similar list in the Arabic history of Ḥamza al-ʿIṣfahānī (*Tārīkh* [Beirut, 1961], 99–103), the list of palaces, castles, and monasteries built by the Ghassānids in Syria in the same century as these churches in South Arabia. It appears in the midst of accounts of the Ghassānids, some of which are just as difficult to evaluate as the accounts of the *Vita*; but it clearly derives from a very reliable source, though unfortunately placed within accounts far inferior in their credibility. The list of Ghassānid structures in Ḥamza has been respectfully treated by E. Herzfeld, "Mšhatta, Hīra und Bādiya," *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, 42 (1921), 113–16. Advances have since been made in the history of the Ghassānids which justify another look at this most important list and which should render it even more credible. A study of this list will appear in the third volume of my forthcoming work, *Byzantium and the Arabs before the Rise of Islam*.

³⁵ The toponymy that will be examined in the following sections pertains not only to the ecclesiastical map, but also to the itinerary of Gregentius in the world of the Semites, Ethiopia and South Arabia, before his consecration of the South Arabian churches (*infra*, Appendix III).

³⁶ For Arabian Christianity, see R. Aigrain, "Arabie," *DHGE*, III, cols. 1158–1339. Aigrain's monumental article still retains its value, but it was written in 1924 and is inevitably becoming outdated. That part of it which deals with South Arabia occupies cols. 1222–53; St. Gregentius is discussed in cols. 1246–47. For a more recent and specialized study of South Arabian Christianity, see J. Ryckmans, "Le christianisme en Arabie du Sud préislamique," in *L'Oriente cristiano nella storia della civiltà*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (Rome, 1964), 413–53. The epigraphic evidence is fully utilized in this article and a bibliography on Christianity in South Arabia is also provided; see also F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, *Die Araber in der alten Welt*, IV (Berlin, 1967), 306–19, on disputed points.

I. THE CHURCHES

There is a striking correspondence between the account of the *Vita* on the erection of churches and what can be inferred from the extant titles of the *Book* on the same subject. From the titles of the latter it is clear that persecutions took place at five cities in South Arabia: Ẓafâr, Najrân, the "town of Ḥaḍramawt," Ma'rib, and [Ha]jarên. Prominence is given to the first three of these cities; according to the titles of the *Book*, these were destroyed by burning. The *Vita* also describes the church-building activity of Caleb in five cities, Ẓafâr, Najrân, Qâna', Atarph, and Legmia, and it also gives prominence regarding church building to the first three cities. Except for some problems of identification, the accounts of the *Vita* and the *Book* are in essential agreement. Thus, the *Vita* is confirmed not only in the general terms already discussed but also in matters of detail.

Najrân

The *Vita* lists three churches built by Caleb in Najrân (*Vita*, 63): the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Life-giving Resurrection (τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς ζωοποιοῦ ἀναστάσεως); the Church of the Holy Mother of God (τῆς ἁγίας θεοτόκου); and the Church of the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas (τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων καὶ Ἀρέθα τοῦ ἀοιδίου).

The first church, that of the Resurrection, was most probably built on the site of the famous church burnt by Yûsuf and turned by him into a synagogue, referred to in the title of chapter XIII of the *Book*, in Symeon's *Letter S* (p. 503 line 2), and in his *Letter G* (III.A-B), which adds a few details.

The restored church is the one most frequently mentioned in the sources. There are important references to it in *Letter S* of Simeon and in the *Martyrium Arethae*; in the *Letter* the chief martyr, Arethas, remembers it in his speech, and he also remembers it in his will and endows it handsomely (*Letter S*, 410 line 27, 511 line 2). The accounts of the *Martyrium Arethae* (sec. 38) are also informative regarding this restored church, and its accounts confirm and supplement those of the *Vita* concerning its endowments.³⁷ They also indicate that the construction work ordered by Caleb was a question of rebuilding rather than constructing an entirely new edifice, a point well brought out in the *Martyrium Arethae*'s Latin version, *eamque reaedificavit simul cum sanctissima ecclesia*.

The dedication of the restored church to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ or, as the *Vita* puts it, to "Jesus Christ of the Life-giving Resurrection," most probably indicates that the former church had also been so dedicated.³⁸ The phrase "of the Life-giving Resurrection," however, may have been added to

³⁷ It is of interest that the Arabic sources have preserved echoes of what must have been an endowment for the *Qubba*, the "Dome" of Najrân, the expenses of which came to ten thousand *dînârs* annually; Isfahâni, *Aghânî* (Beirut, 1955-60), XII, 7.

³⁸ The dedication of the church to Jesus Christ could derive some support from *Letter S* of Simeon. In the dialogue between the Ḥimyarite king and the child of three, the latter tells the king that he saw Christ at the church (*Letter S*, 512 line 21). This could only mean that he saw a painting or a mosaic, which in turn could imply that the church was dedicated to Him.

the name of the newly built church as a pointed reference to the martyrs who had been burnt in it during the persecution. It is also noteworthy that the title of chap. XIII in the *Book* on the burning of the church explicitly mentions "the sons of the covenant" to designate those who were burnt in the church, in spite of the fact that they were not the only group who were burnt. The Syriac for the "sons of the covenant" or the "brethren of the holy order" is *Bnai-Qyámâ*, and this controversial phrase admits of many renderings, one of which is the "sons of the Resurrection," although the Syriac term for resurrection is usually in the feminine form, *Qyámtâ*.^{38a} This could have been the inspiration of the qualifying phrase "of the Life-giving Resurrection." Finally, the qualifying phrase may have been employed as part of the new dedication of the church in reply to Yûsuf's views on the Crucifixion (*Book*, 13a).³⁹

Of particular interest is the description of this church in the *Vita* as "the most beautiful" (περικαλλιστάτην), a description not applied to any of the other eight churches listed in the *Vita*. The reservation of this epithet to the church in Najrân is an incidental remark that could speak for the authenticity of this part of the *Vita* which deals with the erection of Christian churches in South Arabia.⁴⁰ The epithet is consonant with what the Arabic sources say on the beautiful and impressive Christian edifices of Najrân, sources which are completely independent of the *Vita*, and, as far as these edifices are concerned, very trustworthy.⁴¹

The Church of the Resurrection was probably the principal church in Najrân which, upon the consecration of Paul as the first bishop of Najrân, had become the episcopal church;⁴² it may confirm this view that the *Martyrium Arethae*

^{38a} See G. Nedungatt, "The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church," *OCP*, 39 (1973), 193 note 1.

³⁹ The point of relating the dedication to some features of the local scene in Najrân is significant. The relation of the two is important in showing that the list of churches in the *Vita* has not been inspired by the imagination of the writer but that it is a list whose genuineness can be demonstrated by relating it to certain facts which pertain to South Arabia. The dedication of the other churches will also be discussed for the same reason.

⁴⁰ The epithet recalls τὴν οὖσαν νῦν ἀγιωτάτην ἐκκλησίαν of *Martyrium Arethae*, sec. 38, one of those internal indications and guides to the date of its composition, noted by Carpentier (*Martyrium Arethae*, 759 note b).

⁴¹ For these sources, see *infra*, pp. 68–76. Although it is the *martyrium* which seems to have impressed the Arabs most, the other Christian temples of Najrân are also remembered in the Arabic sources for their artistic excellence. It is of interest to note that the epithet, "most beautiful," in the *Vita* must of course refer to the church as it stood in the second half of the sixth century, possibly *ca.* 570. This reference tallies with the descriptions of Najrân's Christian edifices in the Arabic sources, which also refer to these edifices as they must have looked toward the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century, when the original structure built by Caleb would have received the additions and refinements which elicited the admiration of the Arab authors and of the hagiographer who wrote the *Vita* or that part of it on Christian churches in South Arabia.

⁴² In spite of the fact that Zafâr was the capital of the country and naturally became the seat of the bishop, there is no doubt that Najrân continued to have a bishop of its own. This is fully documented in the Arabic sources. It is practically certain that the bishopric of Najrân must have been revived some time after the Ethiopian victory, in view of the fact that Najrân had been the seat of the martyred bishops, Paul I and Paul II, and in view of its importance in the history of Christianity in South Arabia. Najrân probably enjoyed politically a somewhat autonomous status in the sixth century, and this would have been another consideration justifying its being an ecclesiastically

(sec. 38) applies to this church the epithet ἀγιωτάτην, the same one it applies to the "Great" church at Zafâr, which as the capital of Ḥimyar was no doubt also the seat of the bishop of Ḥimyar. The importance of this church is best reflected in the ecclesiastical hierarchy associated with it. One of the new facts provided by *Letter G* of Simeon is the list of the martyred clerics in the church of Najrân (*Letter G*, IX.B–C). This list divides the clergy into arch-presbyters, archdeacons, and archsubdeacons. If these were ministers assigned to the church of Najrân, then this church must have been very large indeed in view of this great number of clergy. On the other hand, it is possible that these were ministers who had been consecrated for assignments to various parts of South Arabia, such as the Najrânite presbyter who was martyred in Ḥaḍramawt (*Letter G*, II.B). In either case, the list reflects the importance of Najrân as the principal center of Christianity in South Arabia, whither these clerics assembled, probably after the first Ethiopian invasion, for the propagation of Christianity in South Arabia. It is noteworthy that some of them were foreigners to South Arabia, and this fact suggests that they had converged on Najrân, dispatched from Ethiopia, from Ḥîra, and from Byzantium, as part of a concerted effort to Christianize South Arabia after the first Ethiopian invasion. The large number of clergy assembled in Najrân and the implications of their presence in that city make even clearer the special attention which Yûsuf paid to Najrân.

The second church, that of the Holy Mother of God, was built, according to the *Vita*, in the area of the *stadium* (ἐν τοῖς Σταδίου μέρεσι).

What is meant by *stadium* in this context? The term belongs to the urban topography of the Graeco-Roman world, but when it is applied to the urban scene of a South Arabian city such as Najrân, its meaning is not quite clear.⁴³ A number of possibilities suggest themselves: it could denote a racecourse, possibly a hippodrome, and not inappropriately, since Najrân was renowned for its horses;⁴⁴ or it could denote the marketplace, the agora.⁴⁵

The *Book* could give some illumination to this problem by its reference to the sites of martyrdom it describes, but the large *lacunae* preclude a definitive solution. The *stadium* could be identified with one of the sites that witnessed the passion of the individual martyrs or of groups of martyrs. Perhaps the most likely is the site where the freeborn men and later the freeborn women were martyred, the place suggested by Yûsuf where "the rest of the inhabitants of Najrân may also see it and be frightened" (*Book*, 28b).

This interpretation may be defended by the fact that the place where so

autocephalous see, which, however, might have been related to the see of Zafâr, the capital of the country, whose bishop must have been the metropolitan of the whole South Arabian region. If Abrahah led South Arabia to the Chalcedonian fold, then that country would have had two ecclesiastical hierarchies, as did Syria in the sixth century, and this circumstance would have both ensured the continuance of the see of Najrân and enhanced its autonomy.

⁴³ On the South Arabian city in ancient times, see Grohmann, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 26), 140–243, esp. 140–45, and 144 for the city plan of Qarnawu.

⁴⁴ See the chapter on the poet A'shâ and Najrân for many references to the horses and horsemen of Najrân: Isfahânî, *Aghânî* (*supra*, note 37), XII, 3–19.

⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that the term *agora* occurs in Law LXII of the *Leges*, col. 616.

many martyrs were killed would have been an obvious choice for erecting a church, which thus not only would have enshrined their relics but also would have been built *in situ*. The choice of this particular dedication may also support this interpretation — the “Holy Mother of God” would be appropriate for a church where women were martyred. This dedication has also obvious relevance to the Jewish-Christian polemic on the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as is clear from the phrase employed to describe Jesus as “the son of Mary” (*Book*, 13a, 26b).

Unlike the first church, this one would have been a new construction, not a restoration. Apparently Najrân had previously only *one* church,⁴⁶ as is clearly implied in the titles of the chapters of the *Book* on the persecutions in Najrân, and this one church would have been the Church of the Resurrection.

The third church was dedicated to the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas. It was built near Arethas’ house in a place which had earlier been a most marvelous garden or orchard (πλησίον τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ, κήπον θαυμασιώτατον τὸν τόπον πρώην πεφηνότα).

Even more significant than the περικαλλιστάτην, which was applied to the first Church of the Resurrection, the reference to the house and garden of Arethas is a most precious detail which supports the authenticity of the accounts of this part of the *Vita*. This topographical detail has the ring of authenticity,⁴⁷ and what is more, it is verified by an appeal to an external source, none other than *Letter G* of Simeon, where it is stated that Arethas was buried near his house (*Letter G*, VIII.B). Of even greater importance is the statement that the site had earlier been a garden. Najrân was, and indeed still is, a most fertile oasis the luxuriance of whose vegetation is proverbial (*infra*, p. 73). The reference to a garden associated with Najrân is thus a true statement, indicating that the author must have derived his information from an authentic account of what he described. What is impressive is not the truth of the statement on the fertility of Najrân in general, but the specific statement that Arethas was buried in a garden, and from the context it is implied that it was his garden. This conforms with the accounts of *Letter G* of Simeon, which imply that Arethas had a garden near his house. The last stage of Maḥyâ’s martyrdom is described as having taken place under a tamarisk tree which stood opposite the courtyard of her master, Arethas, near the northern gate of the city (*Letter G*, VII.A). Apart from the Mosque of ‘Abdullâh, this is probably the only Christian edifice in Najrân whose location can be described with relative precision.

These newly built churches in Najrân undoubtedly enshrined relics of the martyrs,⁴⁸ and probably were built either at the scene of the passion or of the burial. But of these three churches, only this last one was dedicated to

⁴⁶ Presumably, in addition to the church, private houses in Najrân were used as places of worship.

⁴⁷ Even without the verification that it received from Simeon’s *Letter G*; it cannot be considered an embroidery on the part of the hagiographer because the list is a dry one, and the embroidery would sound a dissonant note.

⁴⁸ Cf. the statement in the *Book* (p. 54a) on the building of churches by Caleb, that the “bones of the holy martyrs were brought into them in triumph.”

the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas. This raises the question whether this edifice was a church or a *martyrium*.

There is no doubt that there was a *martyrium* in the technical sense erected at Najrân. The city was conceived as the City of Martyrs in spite of the fact that it was not the only one whose Christians laid down their lives for their faith. But it was the city of martyrs par excellence: witness the number of chapters devoted to it in the *Book*, and the fact that the *Martyrium Arethae* singles it out and describes it in section 38 as "the city of martyrs" (τὴν πόλιν τῶν μαρτύρων). More important is the express statement of the *Martyrium Arethae* in the same section that Caleb made the place where the martyrs were "burnt and thrown" an asylum and an object of veneration (σεβάσμιον καὶ ἄσυλον τόπον). The idiom of the *Martyrium Arethae* is clear, made even clearer by contrast with that of the preceding statement on Caleb's rebuilding of the church of Najrân. The testimony of the *Martyrium Arethae* that a *martyrium* was erected at Najrân is corroborated by the Arabic sources, in spite of some ambiguity as to which edifice these sources describe. They definitely refer to a building that answers to the description of the one mentioned in the *Martyrium Arethae*, and they even use a term which is identical with that used by the latter work in describing the *martyrium* as an asylum (*infra*, p. 74).

There are a number of possibilities which suggest themselves for interpreting the text of the *Vita* on what it calls the Church of the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas. The referent may be the famous *martyrium*, loosely described in the *Vita* as an *ecclesia*, a description justified by usage—in those days churches were often referred to as *martyria*, since they had to contain relics of martyrs; this would, of course, be particularly true of Najrân, the City of Martyrs. The referent may be a congregational church which was dedicated to the Martyrs and St. Arethas, and which was quite distinct from the famous *martyrium*. The referent may also be a *martyrium*-church complex, an edifice which functioned both as a church for the celebration of the liturgy and as a *martyrium* for pilgrims and visitors to the shrine. Finally, the *Vita* may have united accounts of two different edifices, one for the martyrs collectively and another for St. Arethas. The latter is distinguished as the chief martyr, and his privileged position was recognized even by Yûsuf, who granted that Arethas' body be buried near his house, while consigning the other martyrs to collective burial. It is not, therefore, impossible that a special *martyrium* or a chapel was built in his honor on the spot where he was buried near his house. In this case, this *martyrium* must be distinguished from the more general one built for the other martyrs, since according to the *Martyrium Arethae* the latter was built on the spot where the martyrs were burnt and thrown (καέντα καὶ ῥιφέντα). It is clear from the accounts of the *Book* that the martyrs were buried outside the city walls, and this would be a different spot from that of Arethas' house.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ See *infra*, Appendix I.

Zafâr

The *Vita* lists three churches built by Caleb in Zafâr (*Vita*, 63): 1. The Great Church of the Holy Trinity (τὴν μεγάλην ἐκκλησίαν ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος); 2. The Church of the Holy Mother of God (καὶ ἑτέραν...ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου); and 3. The Church of the Holy Apostles (καὶ ἄλλην...ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων).

1. The Church of the Holy Trinity, like that of the Resurrection in Najrân, most probably was not a new edifice but a restoration on the site of the old church in Zafâr, mentioned in Simeon's *Letters* and *Book*, and almost certainly in the three Yûsuf inscriptions.⁵⁰ This conclusion could be fortified by an inference from both the *Book* and the inscriptions, namely, that there had been only one church in Zafâr. If so, then it is natural to suppose that, of the three churches built by Caleb in Zafâr, the first one rose on the site of the old one, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, which had been destroyed; it was the first because of the prominence given to it in the *Vita*, which refers to it as the "Great" church.

The history of this church deserves a reconstruction. From the evidence of Simeon's work, the church was not only the scene of the massacre of the Ethiopians but was also an Ethiopian foundation, built by the Ethiopians themselves (*Letter G*, II.A). As such, the church probably did not go back to a distant past but to a very recent one, possibly the period following the first Ethiopian invasion mentioned in the *Book*. The works of Simeon, particularly *Letter G*, throw more light on the previous history of this church. The account of the first persecution was told briefly in the *Book*, as can be inferred from the titles of its chapters, but it is not clear exactly where the "Himyarites were persecuting the Christians," as stated in the title of chapter IV. But *Letter G* of Simeon illuminates some of these obscurities, since it indicates that it was at Zafâr rather than at Najrân that the main weight of this first persecution had fallen. One of the precious passages of *Letter G* describes the stoning in Zafâr of Paul, the first bishop of Najrân. The journey of Paul to Zafâr and his subsequent martyrdom could imply the existence of a Christian edifice in the city before the first Ethiopian invasion, but whether or not this edifice was originally an Ethiopian foundation, as it later became, is not clear. Its Ethiopian character probably attached to it after the first Ethiopian invasion.⁵¹ The antecedents of this Christian church in Zafâr are as obscure as the history of Christianity in Zafâr and South Arabia. There are, however, the two well-known references to the introduction of Christianity into South Arabia which are relevant to the discussion of the church of Zafâr:

⁵⁰ For the third and latest of these inscriptions to be published, see Jamme, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 2), 39–42. The reference to the church of Zafâr, *qlsn*, occurs in line 3 of the inscription; see the commentary, *ibid.*, 43–45, which disputes the previous interpretation of *qlsn* as church (*ecclesia*), but to me the old interpretation remains the most convincing.

⁵¹ This view could derive considerable support from the possibility that Ethiopia, at least the Royal House, reverted to paganism after the first conversion to Christianity in the fourth century and was indeed pagan until the eve of the first Ethiopian invasion of South Arabia; see *Martyrs*, 252–60.

one relating to the more recent past concerning Bishop Silvanus during the reign of Anastasius (491–518), and the other relating to the more distant past of the fourth century—the mission of Theophilus Indus to the court of Ḥimyar, and the explicit reference to his building a church in Ṣafâr itself. Between the two there is the controversial reference to Christianity in connection with the alleged conversion of the Ḥimyarite King ‘Abd-Kulâl in the fifth century.⁵² It is not impossible that this Ethiopian church at Ṣafâr had originally been the church built by the Arian Theophilus, and that it had survived the vicissitudes of these two centuries until it was destroyed by Yûsuf, *ca.* 520. This view is supported by the following considerations. The difficulty of obtaining permission to build a church in non-Christian South Arabia, especially in the capital, Ṣafâr, suggests that the permission, given once to Theophilus Indus, was not likely to be repeated, and that the Christian tradition continued in Ṣafâr with the old church as its center or nucleus. Moreover, the epigraphic evidence supports this conclusion. The term used for this church is not the Semitic,⁵³ but the Greek term ἐκκλησία. This suggests that the church goes back to the time when it was founded by a missionary sent by Byzantium who gave it the Greek name ἐκκλησία, which survived throughout the following period, even after the church had possibly undergone a different ecclesiastical direction and affiliation.

The *Vita* calls the church the “Great Church of the Holy Trinity.” The dedication to the Holy Trinity may be significant. If the dedication simply perpetuates an earlier dedication, as is natural to suppose if the church was a restoration of the old one, then the significance of the dedication could be related to a distant past when Byzantium’s affiliation with Arianism had come to an end in the reign of Theodosius I. The dedication could have reflected this doctrinal return to Orthodoxy. On the other hand, it could have been a reflection of the Jewish-Christian polemic in which the Trinity figured prominently, as is clear from Yûsuf’s speech in the *Book*; indeed, in the *Vita* (p. 61) Yûsuf is called “the foe of the Holy Trinity.” The dedication could reflect both possibilities; originally influenced by Byzantium’s return to Nicene Orthodoxy late in the fourth century, the name later acquired an additional significance related to the Christian-Jewish polemic of the sixth century.

Perhaps more important is the epithet “Great” used to describe the church. Of all the nine churches built by Caleb, this is the only one which is described as “the Great Church,” and this must be significant. “Great” in this context could have only one connotation; namely, that this is the main church not only in Ṣafâr, but also in the whole of South Arabia. In other words, it was

⁵² For a discussion of these Christian missions to South Arabia, see Ryckmans, “Le christianisme” (*supra*, note 36), 418–20, 422 note 51, 428–29.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 419–20. The use of the Syriac term *bî‘îâ* rather than the Greek *qlsn* for the church at Ma’rib in Abraha’s dam inscription could very well be for the reason that Ryckmans has suggested. One could add that Abraha’s later use of the term *qlsn* or *al-Qalls* for the church which the Arabic sources credit him with building may have been inspired by his desire to emphasize his Byzantine affiliations after his possible turn to the Chalcedonian position. The changes he introduced in the opening religious formulas of his inscriptions could be cited as a parallel for the method Abraha employed to reflect a change in his position; see *supra*, note 19.

the cathedral church, the seat of the bishop of Zafâr and center of the ecclesiastical province of South Arabia. In support of this explanation the following points should be considered. Zafâr was the capital of Ḥimyar, a recently Christianized country under a newly elected Christian king, Abraham, who resided there. Thus, the city would naturally have become the seat of the highest ecclesiastical authority in the land, the metropolitan bishop;⁵⁴ his church, his "cathedral," would also have become the principal church in the country. Second, the installation of a bishop in Zafâr must have been particularly called for after the successful second Ethiopian invasion, since Zafâr apparently had not previously been the seat of a bishop. This can be inferred from the silence of the sources, the *Book* and the *Martyrium Arethae*, on the matter. Paul I was only visiting there when he was martyred as bishop of Najrân.⁵⁵ Perhaps the Jewish persuasion of the last Ḥimyarite kings whose residence was in Zafâr did not tolerate the consecration of a bishop for their capital. Possibly because of this, Monophysite Christianity had its first bishop not in Ḥimyarite Zafâr, the capital, but in Arab Najrân, the more receptive city.⁵⁶ With the Ethiopian victory, the situation radically changed in favor of Christianity, and the ecclesiastical administration of the country naturally had to have its metropolitan bishop resident in the capital. This was of course a return to normality, since Zafâr had antedated Najrân as the city which provided the site for the first Christian church in South Arabia; and, if this church had been an episcopal seat, then the see of Zafâr would have antedated that of Najrân. Thus, in addition to its privileged location in the capital, it had the prestige of a remoter antiquity. The hagiographer, most probably conversant with the relevant passages in the ecclesiastical historians on the introduction of Christianity to South Arabia, would have considered it the closest church to the Byzantine tradition. Even if it was founded by Theophilus Indus during the reign of the heretical Emperor Constantius, it still had some connection with imperial Byzantium and would have been recognized as an old Byzantine foundation.⁵⁷

2. The Church of the Holy Mother of God. According to the *Vita*, this church was built "in the middle of Dana, as the wide street is called" (ἐν μέσῳ τῆς Δάνας, πλατείας οὕτω προσαγορευομένης).

⁵⁴ Indeed, in the *Leges* and the *Dialogus* St. Gregentius of Zafâr is referred to not as bishop but as archbishop. He consecrates bishops for the cities of South Arabia (*Leges*, col. 573C), and these bishops, among other ecclesiastics, attend his funeral in Zafâr (*Dialogus*, col. 784A-B).

⁵⁵ *Martyrs*, 46.

⁵⁶ Additional reasons could be suggested, e.g., proximity to the Ghassânids and to the main centers of Monophysitism in Syria.

⁵⁷ Although the authenticity of the *Leges* and *Dialogus* has not yet been settled, it is of some interest to note references in these two works to this church at Zafâr in view of the silence of history on this edifice after the sixth century. This church is also referred to as μεγάλη (great), the same epithet used in the *Vita*. First, the coronation of Abraham, the newly appointed king of the Ḥimyarites, is described as having taken place in this church (*Leges*, col. 569B); second, the graveyard of this church received the remains of St. Gregentius (*Dialogus*, col. 784A-B). It is noteworthy that the church is called μεγάλη in both references, and is described further in the *Leges* as dedicated to the Holy Trinity (τῇ ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος οἰκοδομηθείσῃ). In these two descriptions the *Leges* and the *Dialogus* confirm the *Vita*.

The specification of the site where the church was built is a valuable topographical note, such as that described above in connection with the Church of the Holy Martyrs and the Glorious Arethas in Najrân. Striking in this topographical note is the use of the South Arabian name Dana with a gloss, a detail which speaks for the authenticity of the account and therefore deserves a careful analysis.

In view of the fact that the hagiographer glosses Dana with πλατεία (broad way or wide street), it is natural to think that it is the second part of a word such as *maydân*, signifying square or plaza. But there are serious objections to this interpretation. First, it is not certain that by then *maydân* had made its way into the topographical terminology of the South Arabian city;⁵⁸ second and more important, it is clearly a proper noun with which the hagiographer had some difficulty. In spite of the fact that he translates it πλατεία, the question arises why, if it was a common noun signifying a wide street, the hagiographer found it necessary not only to translate it but also to transliterate it, and why he did not simply translate it as he did *stadion*, where the church of the same name was built in Najrân.

These objections lead to the conclusion that some other etymology has to be found for the proper noun "Dana" and that some confusion is involved in the process of translation. It is almost certain that Dana is none other than Ray-dan,⁵⁹ the famous royal palace of the Ḥimyarites in their capital Zafâr. The confusion in the text is easily explicable. Because of its orthography this particular word must have presented a puzzle to the hagiographer or his source, as indeed it did to others such as the copyist of Simeon's *Letter G*, where it appears mutilated because of the similarity in the orthography between the *r* and the *d* in Syriac.⁶⁰ In the Greek *Vita* it appears less mutilated, and the chances are that either the first syllable, Ray, dropped out from the Syriac original, or that the mutilation derives from the Syriac original itself, where the preposition *d* (which expresses the genitive relation) after "middle" and before "Raydan" was confused with the *r* of Raydan and the entire first syllable of Ray-dan was thought to be a dittograph of the genitive preposition *d* preceding it. Moreover, πλατεία in the explanatory phrase that follows Dana can easily be emended to παλάτιον. This is supported by the fact that there is reference to the royal palace in the preceding description of the Great Church, built near the palace. Thus, Caleb built two churches according to the list: the Church of the Holy Trinity, the Great Church, built *near* the palace; and the Church of the Holy Mother of God, built in the palace itself.

This restoration of the text is decisively supported by the fuller account of the *Martyrium Arethae* concerning the church-building activity of Caleb in Zafâr.⁶¹ This account, which speaks of Caleb's having built a church in the palace, is particularly valuable in complementing that of the *Vita*. It also tells

⁵⁸ On the topographical features of the South Arabian city, see *supra*, note 45.

⁵⁹ For this famous palace, see al-Hamdânî, *Al-Iklîl; The Antiquities of South Arabia*, ed. and trans. N. A. Faris (Princeton, 1938), 20–29.

⁶⁰ *Letter G*, I and notes (*Martyrs*, 66).

⁶¹ *Martyrium Arethae*, sec. 38. On this, see *Martyrs*, 226.

how the Ethiopian negus dug with his own hands for seven days in the Royal Palace in Zafâr⁶² as his contribution to the building of the church.

The status of the *Martyrium Arethae* as a sixth-century source is established and the evidence from it is solid, so that it must be taken into account in solving the problem posed by the text of the *Vita*. Since the *Martyrium Arethae* unequivocally speaks of a church built in the palace (ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ), and since the *Vita* also speaks of a church built ἐν μέσῳ τῆς Δάνας, it is practically certain that the two hagiographers are speaking of the same church, Dana being none other than Raydan, the *palatium* referred to in the *Martyrium Arethae*.⁶³

3. The Church of the Holy Apostles was built at the western gate of the city (ἐπὶ τὴν κατὰ δυσμὰς πύλην τῆς πόλεως). Again, the topographical note is important both for precisely locating the church and for authenticating the *Vita*. It is also informative on Zafâr itself, i.e., that it had a gate facing west.⁶⁴ This church, like the preceding one, was probably a new foundation. Its dedication to the Holy Apostles may have had no special significance, but was simply in the Christian tradition of naming churches after the Holy Apostles as in Constantinople, and possibly in Axum itself.⁶⁵ On the other hand, it may have had some significance related to the Ethiopian church's conception of itself as Apostolic, and possibly to the tradition which linked the spread of Christianity in South Arabia to the ministry of the Apostle Thomas, to whom one of the churches of Qâna' was dedicated.

Qâna'

The *Vita* (p. 63) lists three churches built by Caleb in what it calls Akana, undoubtedly the well-known city of Qâna' on the southern shore of

⁶² There is no good reason for rejecting the statement as incredible, although there might have been a mistake in reporting the number of days involved in that self-imposed hard labor. In the *Vita* (pp. 63–64) Caleb is said to have put his soldiers to work and his officers to supervise the work of the Himyarites in the building of churches, and this corroborates the accounts of the *Martyrium Arethae* on Caleb's participation. His indulging in this "manual labor" is consonant with what is known from the sources about this enthusiast in word and deed. He is the charismatic leader, who inspires his soldiers and followers not only by precept and command but by personal example. For a parallel to this, see *Martyrs*, 226 note 2.

⁶³ The description of the church in the *Martyrium Arethae* as τὴν οὖσαν νῦν ἀγιοτάτην ἐκκλησίαν is noteworthy. Its description as νῦν ἀγιοτάτην by the Chalcedonian author of the *Martyrium Arethae* could reflect the fact that the church of Zafâr at the time of writing, in the second part of the sixth century, had become affiliated with Constantinople, South Arabia having possibly returned to the Chalcedonian fold during the reign of Abraha. That the hagiographer chose to refer to this church built in the palace, the new foundation, rather than to the Great Church, the older and more important one built near the palace, is fully explained by the fact that the reference occurs in the second part of the *Martyrium Arethae*, the *Aethiopica*, which extols Caleb as a crusader. The hagiographer is mainly interested in him as a Christian soldier, who vanquishes his adversary, and, as part of this duel of strength, he is naturally attracted to the episode that illustrates this, namely, the occupation by the victorious negus of the palace of his adversary, his digging in it, and the conversion of what had been a non-Christian royal residence into a Christian shrine. The graphic detail on Caleb's digging for seven days was an added attraction that further enhanced the portrait of this sixth-century crusader.

⁶⁴ This agrees with what is known about the nine gates of Zafâr, for which see Hamdânî, *Iklîl* (*supra*, note 59), 22–23.

⁶⁵ The names of the churches of Axum in the sixth century could suggest Ethiopian influence upon the choice of the various dedications, particularly those of the churches in Zafâr, the capital; for the churches of Axum, see J. Doresse, *L'empire du Prêtre-Jean* (Paris, 1957), I, 198–243 and the relevant bibliography.

Arabia:⁶⁶ the Church of the Ascension of the Savior (τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῆς 'Αναλήψεως); the Church of John, the Forerunner ('Ιωάννου τοῦ Προδρόμου); and the Church of the Apostle Thomas (Θωμᾶ τοῦ ἀποστόλου).

The other sources are silent on church building in Qâna' and, indeed, on Christianity itself in this city, unless Qâna' can be identified with one of the localities mentioned in these sources. This silence enhances the value of this passage in the *Vita*, the only source of precise information on the existence of three churches in that city in the sixth century.

In view of the exiguity of information on this Christian center in the distant South, perhaps the most southerly outpost of Christianity in the Arabian Peninsula, this valuable passage allows but a few, necessarily inferential observations. The names of these churches, especially the two dedicated to John the Baptist and the Apostle Thomas, represent some departure from the pattern of the names of the churches in both Zafâr and Najrân. In a country newly converted to Christianity, many of whose inhabitants were possibly baptized collectively, the dedication of a church to John the Baptist is not inappropriate.⁶⁷ The association of the Apostle Thomas in some church traditions with the evangelization of those parts may account for the dedication of the third church to him,⁶⁸ perhaps with the suggestive implication of the apostolicity of that church. The name Thomas appears twice in the sources relating to South Arabia: in connection with the first Ethiopian invasion when the mysterious Bishop Thomas⁶⁹ appeals to the negus for help, as stated in the title of chapter IV of the *Book*; and again in *Letter G* of Simeon which refers to the martyrdom in Ḥaḍramawt of a priest by the name of Thomas (*Letter G*, II.B). It would be difficult to draw a conclusion on the relation of these two ecclesiastics to Qâna'. One can only suggest as a possibility that their ministry was in Qâna'. This possibility becomes a certainty, at least in the case of the martyred priest, if Qâna' proves to be the "town of Ḥaḍramawt" mentioned both in the *Book* and in *Letter G*. In this case it is also quite possible that there was a church in Qâna' dedicated to the Apostle Thomas, the church burnt by Yûsuf, as stated in the title of chapter XXX of the *Book*; and it was probably over the burnt ruins of this church that Caleb built the new Church of St. Thomas.

⁶⁶ For Qâna' and other South Arabian localities, see H. von Wissmann and M. Höfner, *Beiträge zur historischen Geographie des vorislamischen Südarabien* (Mainz, 1952); H. von Wissmann, *Zur Geschichte und Landeskunde von Alt-Südarabien* (Vienna, 1964); on Qâna' in particular, see also B. Doe, "Ḥusn al-Gurab and the Site of Qâna," *Le Muséon*, 74 (1961), 191-98.

⁶⁷ Qâna' may even have been the scene of a collective baptismal ceremony. Speaking of the arrival of the newly consecrated bishop of South Arabia in the country, the *Martyrium Arethae*, sec. 38, specifically mentions baptizing the people among his activities.

⁶⁸ For the various traditions on the evangelization of South Arabia, see Ryckmans, "Le christianisme" (*supra*, note 36), 418-25, 440-45. It should be noted in this connection that one of the Arabic versions of the *Martyrium Arethae* credits the Apostle Simeon the Zealot with the evangelization of South Arabia; see *Martyrs*, 182.

⁶⁹ On Bishop Thomas, see *Martyrs*, 254-55. In view of the importance of Qâna' as a Christian center, now revealed by the *Vita*, it is possible that Bishop Thomas might have had his seat in that city.

As the great port of *Arabia Felix* in ancient times, Qâna' would have been a center of Christianity in those regions because of its accessibility and openness to the outside world of missionaries and merchants from Byzantium, Ethiopia, and the Persian Gulf area.⁷⁰ It must have played an important role in the Ethiopian-Ḥimyarite War, since Sumayfa' Ashwa', the future Christian king of the Ḥimyarites, is known to have encamped in its vicinity during the period of the second Ethiopian invasion.⁷¹ In view of the religious character of the war and its implication for the conduct of military operations, the presence of the rebel Sumayfa' there could argue that this was an area which had a Christian community or at least was sympathetic to the Christian invader from Ethiopia. For this reason, the data provided by the *Vita* on the three churches erected at Qâna' become doubly welcome both as a contribution to the ecclesiastical map of South Arabia and as a background for a partial explanation of why the *qayl*, Sumayfa' Ashwa', was stationed in the vicinity of Qâna' ca. A.D. 520.

The resemblance between the accounts of the *Book* and those of the *Vita* have already been noted in general terms. They may now be compared to each other, and this comparison may turn out to be mutually illuminating. This is especially true regarding the possibility of identifying Qâna' with one of the localities mentioned in the *Book*. In chapters XXX and XXI, the titles of which have survived, the *Book* describes the persecutions in the "town of Ḥaḍramawt." The editor of this source noted the difficulty involved in the name of this locality (see *Book*, liii). He argued that Ḥaḍramawt is the name of a region, not a town, and he concluded that the reference could be to the town of Shabwa. The account of the *Vita* opens a new possibility, namely, that this "town of Ḥaḍramawt" may be identified not with Shabwa but with Qâna'.

In support of this view the following arguments may be adduced. First, the *Book* mentions five localities where the persecutions took place, but of these, three are clearly the most important, namely, Zafâr, Najrân, and the "town of Ḥaḍramawt," all three distinguished by reference to churches which were burnt. In the case of the town of Ḥaḍramawt, two chapters are devoted to its persecutions, while Zafâr receives treatment in only one. In the *Vita* prominence is given to three out of the five localities; two of these prominent localities are Zafâr and Najrân. It is, therefore, natural to think of the third, Qâna', as corresponding to what in the *Book* is called the town of Ḥaḍramawt. Second, Qâna' is a town in the district of Ḥaḍramawt. This

⁷⁰ Concerning the islands of Farasân, inhabited by Christians from the Taghlib tribe, and the churches built in these islands, see al-Hamdânî, *Şifât Jazīrat al-ʿArab*, ed. M. Al-Akwa' (Riyadh, 1974), 72-73; also 70, on Socotra.

⁷¹ The generally accepted view that the Sumayfa' Ashwa' of the famous Ḥisn al-Ghurab inscription was the future Ḥimyarite king has been contested by J. Ryckmans, *La persécution des chrétiens Himyarites au sixième siècle* (Istanbul, 1956), 7-12.

leads one to believe that the phrase used in the *Book* to describe the city where the persecution took place, namely, the town of Ḥaḍramawt, may not have been denominatively used, but appellatively; the phrase describes the town by assigning it to the region to which it belongs, Ḥaḍramawt. Thus, the phrase may not mean the town which is called Ḥaḍramawt but the town which belongs to Ḥaḍramawt, implying that it is the region's important center. This appellation is appropriate especially when used by the outside world to refer to the region's port, the city of Qâna'.

If this identification is valid, the difficulty which had faced A. Moberg, the editor of the *Book*, regarding the town of Ḥaḍramawt will disappear. If one accepts the identification, then the *Book* states that there had been a church in Qâna', which had been destroyed by Yûsuf, making one of the three churches built by Caleb a restoration. This identification also clarifies the reference in *Letter G* of Simeon. Since the idiom of *Letter G* is exactly the same as that of the *Book* in referring to the town of Ḥaḍramawt, then the town in the letter, too, will be Qâna'. *Letter G* has preserved a most valuable passage, describing the martyred ecclesiastics in the town (*Letter G*, II.B). This passage also adds to the *Book's* account of the persecutions and of the burning of the church of Qâna' and to the *Vita's* accounts of the number and names of the churches erected by Caleb; to these it adds the names of the ecclesiastics who served in the church of Qâna' and the way in which they died. A lost chapter in the ecclesiastical history of Qâna' may possibly be recovered by this identification.

On the other hand, the "town of Ḥaḍramawt," mentioned in the *Book*, may turn out to be a place other than Qâna'; there are other towns mentioned in the Arabic sources (*infra*, pp. 84-85) which are described by exactly the same phrase used in the *Book*, namely, the "town of Ḥaḍramawt." Both Shibâm and Tarîm are so described, towns in Ḥaḍramawt with either of which the town of the *Book* could be identified, particularly with the second, Tarîm. This does not necessarily invalidate the proposed identification of Qâna' with the town referred to in the *Book*. The term, town of Ḥaḍramawt, can be applied to several localities in Ḥaḍramawt, of which Qâna' at that time could have been one.

In any case, the reference to Qâna' in the *Vita* and the description of its churches are most valuable, perhaps even more valuable, if it is not the town of Ḥaḍramawt, since in this case the *Vita's* account will have preserved the memory of one more ecclesiastical center in South Arabia which otherwise might have been lost. As one of the most important centers in the economic and political life of South Arabia, situated in a region where some Christian or pro-Ethiopian sentiment would be suspected, Qâna' would probably have been visited by Caleb after his victory and have been the scene of some ecclesiastical construction such as the *Vita* describes. The number of churches erected there by Caleb may be called into question. If this objection is sustained, the list of three churches might well reflect the picture of Qâna' as the city developed in the latter part of the sixth century.

Although the *Vita* refers to two other localities as scenes of Caleb's church-building activity, it does so fleetingly, without mentioning the names of any churches. It is clear from this that the *Vita* considers the three cities, Ḥafâr, Najrân, and Qâna', the three main centers of Christianity in South Arabia in the sixth century. These cities represent a geographically well-distributed group from west to north and then to the southeast, comprising the capital, the City of Martyrs, and the seaport. The number and the names⁷² of these churches have already been commented upon, but a concluding synoptic view of the nine churches in the three cities may not be otiose. The number and the names seem to reflect a certain pattern which the Ethiopian king followed in his energetic attempt to ensure the thorough Christianization of the country. Instead of rebuilding the one church that had existed in each of these cities before the invasion, he multiplied the number by three to ensure the pervasiveness of his evangelical effort. These churches are also well distributed within each of the three cities, judging from the topographical hints in the case of two of them. The names of the churches most probably are not only common Christian names, but also reflections of a certain local color and matters of particular importance to the region, e.g., certain theological concepts which were issues in the Christian-Jewish polemic in the South Arabia of the sixth century.

Atephar and Legmia

In addition to the three main centers, Ḥafâr, Najrân, and Qâna', the *Vita* mentions two other places, Ἀταρρ and Λεγμία, where churches were built by Caleb and consecrated by Gregentius (*Vita*, 63, 65), but nothing is said about their number or their names. Unlike the three preceding cities, these two present a difficulty in identification, especially Legmia.

1. Ἀταρρ, Ἀτεφρ: It is practically certain that the initial *alpha* belongs to the word only in its Greek orthographic form and has no counterpart in the Sabaic or the Arabic original, in exactly the same way that Qâna' in Greek is spelled with an initial *alpha*. The word immediately suggests Ḥafâr, which the writer had discussed before, but there are difficulties in this identification. In its form Ἀταρρ,⁷³ the word, even without the initial *alpha*, is spelled differently from Ḥafâr, Τεφρ. And it is extremely unlikely that in the composition of this short passage on the churches of South Arabia, the author would have made the mistake of spelling the name of one and the same city in two different ways and of speaking of it in two different terms. Atarph or Atephar must, therefore, be identified with another locality in South Arabia, and the context could give a clue to the identification. Caleb's progress during his tour of the conquered territory is clearly from the west to the north, then

⁷² A sentence in the *Book* (p. 54a) mentions prophets, apostles, and martyrs in connection with "the erecting of these churches." But prophets, apostles, and martyrs are represented in the dedications of the churches listed in the *Vita*; this sentence in the *Book* could, consequently, give some support to the *Vita*'s account.

⁷³ "ATARPH" has gone through a metathesis which obtained between the *R* and the *PH*, a familiar process in the transliteration of Semitic words into Greek.

to the southeast, from Zafâr to Najrân to Qâna'. The *Vita* places the visit to Atephar after the visit to Qâna' in both passages where the town is mentioned, and this suggests that it was located in those regions of South Arabia east of Qâna'. But it is exactly in those parts that the region of Zufâr, celebrated for its frankincense, is situated. This, then, most probably is the region where the town to be identified with the Atephar of the *Vita* was located. Another important consideration which supports this identification is the fact that Zufâr is closest to Zafâr as a homophone in South Arabian toponymy, and it is often confused with it. The hagiographer, therefore, was neither confused about the locality nor guilty of an orthographic misdemeanor; he was merely trying to transliterate into Greek two quite different but closely homophonous Semitic toponyms, Zafâr and Zufâr.⁷⁴

2. Unlike Atephar, Legmia (Λεγμία) occurs only once, in conjunction with Atephar (*Vita*, 65). From the context of its association with Atephar in the *Vita*, it can be inferred that, like Atephar, it was a city located somewhere in those southeastern parts of the country. More precision may be given to its location through its association with Atephar. When mentioning Atephar for the first time, the *Vita* relates that Caleb distributed his soldiers in Atarph "and the cities in its neighborhood" (καὶ ἐν ταῖς παραπλησίον πόλεσιν) as part of his effort to erect churches in South Arabia. This phrase may be a guide to this Legmia and its whereabouts; namely, that it was one of those cities, not far from Zufâr, since its single occurrence in the *Vita* is in conjunction with that town.

The place or town for which the Greek Λεγμία stands is difficult to tell.⁷⁵ The fifth and last town mentioned in the *Book*, a *scriptio defectiva* which the modern editor, A. Moberg, restored as [Ha]jarên, would bear a very distant resemblance to Legmia; Legmia may be a hopelessly corrupt reading which might be restored as Hajarên, but then Hajarên itself is far from being a certain restoration. On the other hand, comparing the *Book* with the *Vita* to solve the problem of Legmia may be unnecessary or unfruitful. It is true that there is a striking resemblance between the accounts of the two, which justifies juxtaposing them—the number of places, five, being the same in both, and the identification of the first two names and probably the third being certain. But, as has been pointed out earlier in this study, the *Book* is written from a Monophysite point of view. Consequently, in mentioning such places as Hajarên, for instance, it may have selected places which had been Monophysite centers of Christianity, while the *Vita*, which was not written from the same point of view and was composed later than the *Book*, included in its accounts other Christian centers in South Arabia which the

⁷⁴ Ḥaḍramawt has survived as a region, not a city, in South Arabia, as has Zufâr. But just as the *Book* speaks of a city by the name of Ḥaḍramawt, so does the *Vita* in the case of Zufâr. The two documents, then, may reflect a toponymic picture of the southern regions of South Arabia that obtained in the sixth century but which has changed since then.

⁷⁵ There are many noteworthy toponyms in al-Ḥamdânî, such as al-Lajj, Lajja, al-Lajjûn, Lujayn, Lajba, Laḥj, Laḥja; see al-Ḥamdânî, *Ṣiḡat* (*supra*, note 70), index, 530–31; concerning al-Mahjam, see *ibid.*, 540. None of these toponyms, some vocalizations of which are uncertain, answers to the description of Legmia in the *Vita*.

Monophysite writer had either neglected or simply did not include because they had not developed as such until late in the same century.

An alternative possibility may be mentioned, namely, the *Mukhâ* of the three Yûsuf inscriptions.⁷⁶ If the Legmia of the *Vita* experienced a violent metathesis such as "Atarph" did, it could be identified with *Mukhâ*. This latter place has a claim for such an identification, since it is one of two places mentioned in the inscriptions as having had a church and, what is more, probably an Ethiopian one destroyed by Yûsuf; for all these reasons it would certainly have been visited by the victorious Ethiopian negus for his work of reconstruction in South Arabia.⁷⁷

The attempt to identify Legmia with any of the toponyms suggested in the preceding paragraphs has not produced a definitive result, but, at least, it has become clear that the toponym has to be sought in the region of Zûfâr or even farther east, and thus Legmia would have been the most easterly of Caleb's ecclesiastical foundations in South Arabia.⁷⁸ But as indications of confusion in the process of translation from a Syriac original to the Greek *Vita* have been suspected and fruitfully examined, the most plausible explanation for this mysterious toponym, Legmia, is that it is another instance of just such confusion. Since, as has been argued, the toponym was most probably located in the eastern regions of South Arabia, not far from the non-Arab and non-Arabian peoples, including the Persians, it is likely to have been a word that involved the concept of foreigner ('*agam*').⁷⁹ The Syriac orthography of Legmia is easily reducible, at any rate in its consonantal, radical skeleton to '*agam*'.⁸⁰

II. THE BUILDER

The preceding detailed analysis of the *Vita*'s account has dealt with its most valuable part, namely, the data it contributes to the ecclesiastical map of South Arabia. But this analysis has not exhausted the value of

⁷⁶ For which see Ryckmans, "Le christianisme" (*supra*, note 36), 419–20.

⁷⁷ Even after the process of metathesis has brought the two terms close on phonetic grounds, there is a geographical consideration which argues against this identification. The *Vita* associates Legmia with Zûfâr in the easterly regions of South Arabia, and this association places Legmia as far as can be from *Mukhâ*, the Red Sea port which lay in the western part of the country.

⁷⁸ The traces of a Christian foundation in the far eastern parts of South Arabia are reflected in the name of a town in the southern part of what now is the United Arab Emirate, facing the Arabian Sea, Diba al-Bî'a, "Diba of the Church," which, it is almost certain, goes back to ancient times. Some such place could have been the Legmia of the *Vita* since it answers to the description of a town located in the distant east.

⁷⁹ This could derive considerable support from Philostorgius' account of the mission of Theophilus Indus, who founded three churches in South Arabia, one of which was in exactly those distant parts. It is especially noteworthy that the ecclesiastical historian speaks twice of the Persians—the Persian *emporion* and the Persian Gulf—when describing the location of the church. See Philostorgius III.4, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 15), 32–34.

⁸⁰ The '*ayn*' can easily become *lamedh* in the Syriac script, and so '*agmia*' could easily have been misread Legmia. What the toponym had been before it was transformed beyond recognition must remain in the realm of pure speculation. It could have been "the port of the 'Agam'" from which the first part of the compound dropped out, or simply al-'Agami, or al-'Agamiya; the *l* in the Arabic definite article *al* could also explain the *l* in Legmia. For the view that Arabic has to be taken into account as the original of the Syriac document from which this part of the *Vita* derives, see *infra*, Appendix III.

the *Vita*, since it still contains material on related matters which deserves to be explored and discussed. The comparative study of the *Vita* and other related sources undertaken in the preceding section can be carried further in order to draw more fully the ecclesiastical map of South Arabia and to present a more complete picture of Caleb's achievement.

A. One of the five cities mentioned in the *Book* where Christians were martyred is Ma'rib. A comparison with the five cities mentioned in the *Vita* has failed to identify the Ma'rib of the *Book* with any of them. This does not at all mean that Ma'rib was not the scene of martyrdom. The *Book* is the most important source for these matters and was written in the first half of the sixth century, while the *Vita* was composed later, and its author could have been selective. Ma'rib must, therefore, be given an important place on the ecclesiastical map of South Arabia, not only as a city where Christianity had been propagated but also as one that witnessed persecution and martyrdom. For this reason, it must have been one of the cities which Caleb, the avenger of the martyrs, visited during his stay in South Arabia. He would have visited it in any case as a conqueror of South Arabia, since this was the old capital of the Sabaean Kingdom, and it must have retained much of its prestige in spite of the fact that it had been superseded as the capital by Zafâr. This reasoning is borne out by the discovery of the Ethiopic inscription of Caleb in Ma'rib. This inscription, with its most important citation from the Psalms, announces the triumph of Caleb's crusade and testifies to his presence in Ma'rib. In view of the fact that this was one of the five places explicitly mentioned in the *Book* not only as a city where a Christian community had lived but also as a scene of persecution and martyrdom, it is practically certain that the crusading king built a church there. It is also pertinent to note that in the famous Dam Inscription of Abraha in Ma'rib there is an explicit reference to a church which Abraha built in that city.⁸¹ Thus, the existence of at least one church has been epigraphically attested. Therefore, Ma'rib must be considered as one of the centers of Christianity in South Arabia and must be retained on the ecclesiastical map. The fact that the *Book* mentions only five places does not mean that the diffusion of Christianity was limited to these cities. The author of the *Book* wrote within a certain framework, and thus he noted only what fell within that framework.⁸² That there were other centers of Christianity in South Arabia is clear from the testimony of other sources, e.g., the *Vita* itself, incidental references in the Arabic sources, and the observations of modern travelers in the region.⁸³

⁸¹ For Caleb's Ethiopic inscription, see *Martyrs*, 221; "Kebra Nagast," 152 note 39; for Abraha's Sabaic inscription, see *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, pt. 4, II (Paris, 1920), no. 541.

⁸² This point could be related to the problem of the propagation of Christianity in South Arabia by different denominations and in different periods; see the observations in Ryckmans, "Le christianisme" (*supra*, note 36), 416.

⁸³ Legmia and Atephar of the *Vita* and Mukha of the Yûsuf inscriptions have been discussed in the preceding section; Theophilus Indus is supposed to have built in Aden one of three churches, but what happened to this church since its erection in the fourth century is not clear; it could have sur-

The comparative study of the *Book* and the *Vita* concerning these centers and churches also affords a glimpse into the relative importance of these centers. In the *Book*, the three most important centers are Najrân, Zafâr, and the town of Ḥaḍramawt. Their importance is reflected in the number of chapters devoted to them and in the reference to the burning of their churches. The two other places, Ma'rib and [Ha]jarên, are each dispatched in one chapter, and there is no reference to either a church or to the burning of a church. Although the silence of the *Book* on churches may admit of other interpretations, it is more likely that these places either had a modest edifice as a place of worship or had no edifice at all, and that the services were celebrated in private houses. Some echo of this is perhaps audible in the accounts of the *Vita*. After describing the number and names of the churches in the three main centers, Zafâr, Najrân, and Qâna', the *Vita* speaks in general terms of the remaining two places, Atephar and Legmia. The *Vita* neither mentions the number nor the names of the churches in these towns. This seems to correspond to the *Book's* description of the persecutions at Ma'rib and [Ha]jarên,⁸⁴ where no churches are mentioned. One may conclude that in those parts Christianity had not taken strong root or at least not so strong as in the other places. This perhaps explains a statement in the *Vita* that in the erection of the churches in Atephar and possibly in Legmia Caleb sent his soldiers into Atephar and the neighboring cities and compelled the indigenous population to work under the supervision of his officers. He did not do this in Zafâr, Najrân, and Qâna', presumably because of the presence of a large Christian community in those places, which did not need any prodding for the restoration of their ruined churches.

B. The name of Caleb is associated not only with the construction of churches but also with the destruction of idols. According to the *Vita* (p. 63), when St. Gregentius arrived in Zafâr, Caleb was away engaged in this work of construction and destruction. The *Vita's* account may be supplemented by that of the *Martyrium Arethae*, which states in section 39 that Caleb dug for seven days with his own hands in the palace of the Jewish king in Zafâr; the work of destruction is implied in this report.

The accounts of these hagiographic works need not be viewed with undue suspicion. The *Book*, a primary source, does not hide the fact that the Ethiopians revenged themselves fully on the Ḥimyarites by slaughtering

vived into this period and could possibly have been the seat of the mysterious Bishop Thomas. For references in the Arabic sources, see *infra*, note 114, and for the observations of modern travelers, see *infra*, notes 176, 186, 191, 195.

In view of the results which the examination of the *Vita* has produced, the relevant chapter in M. Lequien, *Oriens Christianus* (Paris, 1740), II, 663–66, is due for a reexamination.

⁸⁴ For Hajarên, see R. Van der Meulen and H. von Wissmann, *Hadramaut* (Leiden, 1932), 79–81. Of particular interest is the account concerning the locality El-Meshhed near Hajarên (*ibid.*, 83–87); its name and the description of its antiquities suggest that El-Meshhed could have been the scene of martyrdom in the sixth century.

⁸⁵ See the preceding chapter on the Church of the Holy Trinity in Zafâr, and also the Arabic sources (*infra*, p. 76) on references to the destruction of edifices in South Arabia by the Ethiopians.

great numbers of them (*Book*, 49a-b); the destruction of their idols and temples would have been a natural and concomitant activity, almost entailed by the spirit of hostility and religious animosity which characterized Ethiopian-Ḥimyarite relations. Yûsuf had burnt Christian churches, as mentioned in the *Book*, one of which was the Ethiopian church in Zafâr, and the victorious negus had to avenge the burning of the Ethiopian church and the martyrdom of his countrymen and his coreligionists. The Arabic sources, too, have preserved some material which confirms this. Of the four types of buildings Caleb and the Ethiopians must have destroyed, namely, idols, pagan temples, Jewish synagogues, and royal palaces, these sources refer to the last, thus confirming the essential credibility of the *Martyrium Arethae's* statement on the destruction of the royal palace of Zafâr.⁸⁵

This work of destruction needs and deserves a close examination. There was, of course, the operation of the *lex talionis* which no doubt appealed to the Ethiopian invaders and their negus, a doughty warrior who waged his wars as a biblical king, protected by the power of Jehovah. Allied to this was, of course, the desirability of establishing securely the rule of Ethiopia in South Arabia, to which the destruction of the symbols of the old order would naturally have contributed, especially since the Ethiopian victory did not simply signal the initiation of a new political supremacy in Arabia but introduced in addition a new culture, centered in a religion intolerant of the old order and its pagan symbols.⁸⁶ The work of destruction must have been in part designed to serve Ethiopian imperial interests, especially after the first Ethiopian occupation failed because the invaders did not obliterate the old culture.

Equally significant is the fact that the war was a crusade, which Caleb waged not only as an Ethiopian negus, who wanted to reclaim lost territory, but also as a Christian soldier, who was intent upon the evangelization of South Arabia. The construction-destruction process must be viewed in this context. Destruction of idols and of pagan temples is entailed by the universalistic and evangelistic claims of Christianity and was an activity at which Caleb was in good company, with Theodosius the Great and with his own contemporary, Justinian. Both the *Martyrium Arethae* and the *Vita* provide evidence of Caleb's having engaged in it personally, and this evidence gives Caleb a clear place among what one might term the idoloclasts of the sixth century.

A century later, the Arabian Peninsula was to go through another, more definitive wave of idoloclasm with the rise of Islam, when Muḥammad, the uncompromising monotheist, dispatched his generals to smash the idols of the various tribes and sanctuaries, including those of South Arabia. Caleb's direct and indirect role in the destruction of idols and pagan temples in South Arabia is also important as it unveils a facet of his personality which is of some importance to a fuller understanding of this sainted Ethiopian warrior.

⁸⁶ This parallels the decision of the Caliph Uthmân (644-56) to pull down Ghumdân Palace in Ṣan'â'.

C. The preceding analysis of the sources has shown that, although there may be doubts about associating the building of a given church with the name of Caleb, there is no doubt that the general impression which these sources convey on the importance of Caleb as a church builder is substantially correct. Caleb's contribution to the architectural history of South Arabia, reflected in the literary sources, is confirmed archeologically by the discovery of traces of a similar activity in Ethiopia on the African side of his domain.⁸⁷ This is a type of evidence which bears out the literary hagiographic sources, and it is most welcome both for hammering out with greater fullness the features of the Ethiopian negus as one of the great church builders in the history of the Christian Orient, and for confirming the accounts which describe the rise of Christian churches on the South Arabian skyline. For the architectural history of South Arabia, Caleb's invasion and occupation of the country, thus, represents the inauguration of a new phase, just as it inaugurated a new phase in its religious history. In a country well known in antiquity for its dams, castles, temples, and palaces, a new constituent was now added to its monumental architecture and landscape, namely, the Christian churches which in great numbers now dotted the map of South Arabia.

Church building in South Arabia in the sixth century invites comparison with a similar activity in Syria during the same century, induced by roughly the same cause—the resuscitation of the Monophysite church during the reign of the Ghassânid King Arethas, which found expression in the consecration of new priests and the building of new churches.⁸⁸ But of these three regions, Ethiopia, South Arabia, and Syria, which all witnessed a surge in ecclesiastical construction, South Arabia held a special position. Although it was the latest to be won for Christianity, it was distinguished among the three as a land made holy by the sufferings of its martyrs. And yet, its ecclesiastical history is the least known among the three regions, and this is especially true of its religious architecture. For this reason the account of the *Vita* on the names of churches built in South Arabia, concise as it is, acquires added significance within the larger context of the history of religious architecture in these three predominantly Monophysite regions. With the account of the *Vita* as a basis, the following concluding remarks may be made on church architecture in the South Arabia of the sixth century.⁸⁹

In view of the distinctive character of South Arabia as a country of martyrs, it may be safe to assume that many of the Christian buildings of the sixth century were *martyria*. This fact must have influenced greatly the architectural style of religious structures; the emergence of the dome as the new feature in South Arabian architecture may thus be explained by the

⁸⁷ For an account of excavations at Matara, see F. Anfray, in *ILN*, 17 October 1964, p. 601 ff.

⁸⁸ For churches in Syria in this period, see J. Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie* (Paris, 1947). The relationship between religious architecture in sixth-century Syria and the resuscitation of the Monophysite church under the aegis of the Ghassânids deserves more appreciation.

⁸⁹ For South Arabian art in general, see A. Grohmann, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 26), 140–243; a fleeting notice of al-Qalīs occurs on p. 193.

rise of so many *martyria* over the sites of the sufferings of the martyrs or their relics. The existence of the dome in sixth-century South Arabia is borne out by explicit statements in the Arabic sources on the famous Ka'ba of Najrân and on al-Qalîs, the church Abraha built in Ṣan'â'. These sources are the only ones that discuss this phase of the architectural history of South Arabia. Toward the end of the century the country fell to a new power, Sâsânid Persia, and to a new religion, Zoroastrianism, and in the seventh century to the Arabs of the North and to Islam. But it is more than likely that the architectural designs of the churches, built in the sixth century, have survived in one way or another, however transformed, in the Muslim architecture of South Arabia, represented by the new constituent in the architectural landscape of Islam, namely, the mosque, in much the same way that Muslim mosques in Syria were either affected by Christian religious architecture or were even churches converted into mosques,⁹⁰ as in the case of the Great Mosque of Ḥamâ in Syria. That this process must have been operative in some cases in South Arabia is proved by the fact that some mosques still carry the names of Christian figures, as the mosque of Jarjîs or Sargîs in Tarîm. It would be interesting to examine the extent to which Muslim architecture in South Arabia shows traces of the old Christian architectural styles. One feature of this style, the dome, may be safely assumed to have existed.⁹¹ To what extent the art historian, on the basis of certain architectural features peculiar to the Muslim South Arabian scene, can argue regressively to recover the architectural pattern of the original Christian structures of the sixth century also needs study.

These questions are difficult to answer definitively, since they involve architectural influences which cross religious boundaries. Not so difficult to establish is the influence of Christian South Arabia upon Christian Ethiopia and, more importantly, upon the Christian Fertile Crescent, particularly its western part, Monophysite Syria in particular.

The passions of the martyrs of South Arabia must have given great impetus to the cult of relics in the sixth century. The availability of the relics of martyrs in great abundance would no doubt have contributed to this cult in Syria, and it may also have influenced certain architectural trends toward the building of *martyria* in Syria itself.⁹² The link between the two regions was easily established on two levels. On the general Monophysite level, Syria was mother country of a sort, with the prestige of the patriarchate of Antioch. And it was also the seat of the Ghassânid phylarchs, blood relations to the Ḥârithids of Najrân and the family of the martyrs and themselves great church builders, whose architectural remains have sur-

⁹⁰ For a convenient short account of this, see the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1961), 332–33.

⁹¹ See the relevant works on South Arabia in K. Creswell, *A Biography of the Architecture, Arts, and Crafts of Islam* (Cairo, 1961), 31–38; also O. Grabar, "The Earliest Islamic Commemorative Structures, Notes and Documents," *Ars Orientalis*, 6 (1966), 7–46.

⁹² The relevance of the South Arabian scene to the discussion of dome and *martyrium* is not brought out in the well-known, standard works on the subject, for which see *infra*, notes 121, 122.

vived till the present day. The close relation which obtained between the two regions was clearly reflected in sundry ways and endured for more than a century after the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia, coming to an end during the caliphate of 'Umar (633–44) when the Najrânites, the main Christian community of South Arabia, emigrated to the Fertile Crescent.

D. The *Vita* amplifies what the *Martyrium Arethae* summarizes in section 38, and in so doing clarifies aspects of Caleb's ecclesiastical and civil dispositions during his stay in South Arabia (*Vita*, 63–66).

After the unpleasant experience of the second persecution and the loss of South Arabia to Yûsuf, Caleb was determined not to allow South Arabia to backslide again. For the permanent submission of South Arabia to Christianity and to Ethiopian suzerainty, he clearly envisaged the intensive and extensive Christianization of South Arabia both as a Christian duty and as a sound administrative measure. He was able to erect churches, even putting his army to work on them, but he could not consecrate these churches, and they could not function as places of worship without a canonically ordained clergy.⁹³

His own bishop, Euprepîus, apparently did not accompany the expedition. He was left behind in Ethiopia, as may easily be inferred from Caleb's address on the question of those who apostatized, in chapter XLVIII of the *Book*. Consequently, he had with him only priests, some of whom he released to minister in these churches (*Book*, 56a), but they could not have been very many and could not adequately have supplied the needs of a large, newly converted country. A high-ranking ecclesiastic, a bishop, was needed for the newly conquered and Christianized province. Caleb's own realm was ecclesiastically dependent upon the see of St. Mark in Alexandria, where the bishops of Ethiopia had been consecrated since the time of Athanasius. To secure the ministry of an ecclesiastic with the rank of bishop, Caleb had to apply to Timotheus, the patriarch of Alexandria, for the choice and dispatch of the prospective bishop, particularly since it was with the blessings and proddings of Timotheus or of another patriarch of that same see that Caleb undertook the conquest of South Arabia.⁹⁴

The bishop, dispatched from Alexandria, must have had an arduous task awaiting him in South Arabia: namely, baptizing the people, consecrating a new ecclesiastical hierarchy,⁹⁵ dedicating the newly erected churches throughout the country, and, finally, officiating at the coronation of the newly baptized Himyarite king of South Arabia, all of which he is described as having done in both the *Martyrium Arethae* and the *Vita*.⁹⁶ This bishop,

⁹³ Yûsuf had annihilated the clergy, or most of it, for which see *Letter G*, IX.B–C.

⁹⁴ See *infra*, Appendix IIA.

⁹⁵ Law no. 47 in the *Leges* is of interest in this connection since it reflects the importance of the clergy in the Himyarite state; see *Leges*, col. 605. Whether this law was ever promulgated remains to be seen.

⁹⁶ The political and military situation in the newly conquered territory would certainly have required Caleb's residence in the country for some time, and he had to wait for the bishop's arrival

whoever he was,⁹⁷ must be considered a major figure in the ecclesiastical history of the Arabian Peninsula. His assignment was not the ordinary one of a bishop living within the boundaries of the Christian *oikoumenê*; it was tantamount to an apostolate. It was given to a few bishops to supervise the Christianization of new ecclesiastical provinces; the role played by this bishop, left anonymous in the *Martyrium Arethae*, must be adjudged one of the most significant in the history of the Christian Orient, comparable to that of two fellow Monophysites, i.e., Julian, the apostle of the converted province of Nubia, and possibly John of Ephesus, charged by Justinian with wiping out the pockets of paganism which had survived in Asia Minor.

E. Of particular interest to ecclesiastical history is the Feast of the Martyrs of Najrân. In three places the *Vita* provides some indications for reconstructing the first stage in the rise of the *cultus* of the Martyrs of South Arabia. In describing the dedication ceremonies of the newly built churches, the *Vita* related that Caleb and his bishop held festivities in conjunction with these ceremonies. In the case of Najrân, the phrase used is *ἑνωχίαν τελέσας* (*Vita*, 64), with Atephar and Legmia *ἑνωχούμενοι μεγάλως* (*Vita*, 65), with Zafâr *εὐφροσύνη ἡγον εὐφραινόμενοι καὶ ἑορτάζοντες* (*Vita*, 65). These are general terms from which no definite conclusion can be drawn, although in the case of Zafâr the verb used comes closest to *ἑορτή*, the technical term for an ecclesiastical feast.⁹⁸ General and indecisive as evidence from language is, it can nevertheless be argued that these festive ceremonies represented the first stage in the rise of the cult of the martyrs. For one thing, they were held during the ceremonies for the dedication of the newly erected churches; but these churches, or the important ones, were built over the scenes of martyrdom or contained the relics of recently martyred Christians; the ceremonies could thus have celebrated both the dedication of the churches and the memory of the martyrs. Consideration should be given, too, to the fact that these ceremonies were feasts of good cheer, connected with the *Agapae*, the communal meals of the Apostolic Church, held on certain occasions, among which were the anniversaries of martyrdoms.

The clearest reference to the fact that the martyrs had become saints of the Church and objects of veneration may be found in *Leges*, col. 580C. Speaking of the reign of the Christian king of South Arabia, of his virtues and good works, the writer⁹⁹ makes reference to the commemoration of the

before he could depart. According to the *Book*, Caleb stayed seven months in South Arabia. This long period becomes explicable partly by the fact that he had to wait until a suitable bishop was found, consecrated, and dispatched.

⁹⁷ See *infra*, Appendix IIB.

⁹⁸ Cf. the use of the same term in the *Dialogus*, col. 781C.

⁹⁹ These references from the *Leges* are cited for their interest and relevance in spite of the fact that the authenticity of the work is not certain. It should be noted in this connection that these references in *Leges*, col. 580C, occur in the introductory, narrative part of the work, and for this reason may not be subject to whatever suspicions attend the authenticity of the *Leges* themselves; even if the *Leges* turn out to be spurious, this will not automatically affect the introductory section which may well reflect conditions in South Arabia. The rejection of this introductory part must, therefore, rest on grounds other than those advanced for the rejection of the *Leges* as a whole.

saints (τὰς μνείας τῶν ἁγίων). The term τὰς μνείας admits of no dispute, while the word ἁγίων, which could refer to saints in general, in this case most probably refers to the martyred saints in view of the description of the festive communal meals, which follows the above quoted phrase. But those Arabian regions had their own indigenous martyrs of recent memory, and it is therefore practically certain that these would have been included among the ἅγιοι. At the end of the passage occurs the phrase ἑορτῶν πνευματικῶν (the spiritual feasts); these would have included that of the martyred saints of South Arabia. That they were included in the list of those matters to which the king gave careful attention (*Leges*, col. 581) suggests that the veneration of the martyrs had become a matter of state concern and of national importance.

In this context, Law No. 64 (*Leges*, col. 616) is of particular interest since it specifies penalties for those who do not gather their families and take them to church on certain occasions such as the Great Feast (μεγάλαις ἑορταῖς). These must have included the Feast of the Martyrs of Najrân; consequently, the cult of the Martyrs must have become firmly established and sanctioned by law.¹⁰⁰ A faint echo of this custom of going out to the *martyria* in a festive fashion may have survived in the Arabic sources.¹⁰¹

It is almost certain that the *cultus* of the Martyrs of Najrân goes back to the period of the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia and that Caleb either inspired its inception indirectly or even personally initiated it. This would be consonant with the thoroughness with which he supervised the Christianization of South Arabia. The *Martyrium Arethae*, section 38, implies this in its account of his building a shrine and asylum over the spot where the martyrs were killed or were buried, while a much later work, the *Ethiopic Synaxarion*, explicitly credits him with the initiation of the cult of the Martyrs.¹⁰² If Caleb initiated the *cultus*, it was really Simeon of Bêth-Arshâm who first conceived it, as is clear from the end of his famous *Letter* to his namesake, the abbot of Gabbûla. In view of the correspondence between Simeon and Caleb which *Letter G* has revealed, it is perfectly possible that Caleb received the suggestion for their veneration from Simeon himself.

III. THE SAINT

According to the accounts of the *Book*, Caleb spent seven months¹⁰³ in Arabia, which must have been the busiest period of his life in view of the various activities associated with his name. Little is known about his activities after his return to Ethiopia, and much less about his career before the

¹⁰⁰ See the preceding note.

¹⁰¹ See the section on the Arabic sources, *infra*, pp. 67–87, esp. pp. 72–73.

¹⁰² "And he rebuilt the city of NÂGRÂN and established the commemoration of the martyrs thereof." See the accounts of the martyrdom of St. Arethas in the part which deals with the third month—Khedar (Nov. 7–Dec. 6) of the *Ethiopic Synaxarium*; English translation by W. Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church* (Cambridge, 1928), I, 293.

¹⁰³ Notice that according to the *Vita* (p. 66) Caleb stayed in Arabia for thirty-six months, and according to the *Leges* (col. 572A) thirty-three days after the coronation of Abraham.

South Arabian crusade. Set in this middle period of his life, it may be considered the climax of his career. New sources may throw light on the pre-Arabian and post-Arabian periods and may bring about a reevaluation of their relative importance, but on the basis of present evidence, the Arabian phase must be adjudged the most important, especially for the ecclesiastical historian and the hagiologist, since Caleb is also a saint of the Eastern Church and since this Arabian period of his life is associated with a number of pertinent activities which offer an opportunity to examine the various facets of his achievement and to view them synoptically.

The hagiographical sources may not always be accurate in reporting specific incidents, but there is no doubt concerning the truth of the general picture which the *Martyrium Arethae* and the *Vita* have drawn of Caleb's achievement in South Arabia. As has been argued before, comparing these hagiographic works with incontestable primary sources—the *Book* and epigraphic evidence—points to one conclusion, the essential reliability of the hagiographic accounts. This is, of course, what is important for an appreciation of Caleb's activities. It matters little whether the churches of Qâna' were built by him or by someone else; for the purpose of predicating of him this particular activity, namely, church building, it is enough that he should have constructed the six churches in Zafâr and Najrân, or even the two mentioned in the concise and selective list of the *Martyrium Arethae*. What is important is the reality of the activity involved, not the number of churches, and the same principle may be applied to the rest of his activities.

The achievements which characterize these seven remarkable months spent in Arabia reflect the following distinctive features of Caleb's personality:

1. The Christian Soldier: Caleb leads a daring and hazardous amphibious expedition against a determined enemy waiting for him on the beaches; he is fully confident of victory because he has unshakable faith that his Lord will not desert him: "Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered," he exclaims, inscribing these lines after the victory,¹⁰⁴ which he views as a fulfillment of God's promise; it was God who triumphed, not Caleb's spear, and "It is He who hath made us and not we ourselves" (*Book*, 48b).

Associated with Caleb's courage and faith on this crusade was his activity as an eloquent preacher. From the fragments, preserved in the *Aethiopica* of the *Book* and devoted primarily to addresses by Caleb, it seems that Caleb was endowed with a homiletic gift, which he employed to interpret for his followers the providential aspect of the victory.

2. The Evangelist: The soldier of the Cross was also possessed by great missionary zeal to propagate Christianity, thus displaying the attractive combination of the soldier-missionary.¹⁰⁵ The work of the missionary complements

¹⁰⁴ *Martyrium Arethae*, sec. 37; *Martyrs*, 225–26; "Kebra Nagast," 152–53; for the inscription, see *supra*, note 81.

¹⁰⁵ Since the inscription at Ma'rib has revealed Caleb's interest in the Bible, it is not impossible that he considered the evangelization as well as the conquest of South Arabia as a fulfillment of some biblical prophecies. See Ps. 72, esp. 72:10 and 15; Isa. 43:3 and 60:6, the latter linking Ethiopia with Sheba. For a negus who traced his descent back to Solomon, these references, particularly Ps. 72, might have been especially inspiring.

that of the crusader, construction follows destruction. The construction work was intensive and extensive to ensure the permanence of the structure he was building, and here the combination of soldier-missionary seems to have been a happy one. His missionary work is characterized by an energy and a thoroughness which reflects his military training and temperament. This missionary work contemplated the effective Christianization of South Arabia; for that purpose, he secured the consecration of a bishop for the new ecclesiastical province who would preside over this process of Christianization, which under his supervision would be correctly and canonically carried out. This included the baptism of the converts, the consecration of the priests, the dedication of the churches, and, finally, the coronation of a newly baptized king, a matter of considerable importance for the efficient working of the new Christian structure Caleb erected in South Arabia. In so doing, Caleb wrote an important chapter in the propagation of Christianity in the Near East, a chapter which tends to be forgotten, partly because of the uncertainty which has attended Caleb's very existence and the authenticity of the sources, and partly because of the virtual disappearance of Christianity from South Arabia in the seventh century.

3. The Church Builder: Among his evangelical activities, Caleb's building of churches should be singled out and treated separately, since it was an activity he engaged in directly as a layman; the consecration of priests and other sacred duties were left to others to perform.

As an act of piety this activity should be distinguished from the building of a church, for instance, in the Christian Roman Empire. In the South Arabia of the sixth century it had a deeper significance; it was the work of the missionary who wanted to endow the newly converted province with the most essential and stable element in institutionalized Christianity—the place of worship. In the context of Caleb's military expedition against South Arabia, this pious work redeems the expedition from its purely military and political aspects, supplying the constructive sequel to the work of destruction inflicted upon the country by the invasion. It is most concretely reflected in Caleb's call upon his soldiers to take part in the construction work.

This building activity is important to understanding Caleb himself, until very recently an opaque figure. The negus, not unlike his contemporary, Justinian, seems to have been smitten by a consuming passion for erecting buildings in general and houses of worship in particular; witness not only the great number of structures associated with his name in South Arabia but also in Ethiopia, in Axum itself, especially his famous palace which was described by Cosmas Indicopleustes. This passion for building may call for an explanation, particularly in view of the gradual emergence of Caleb as a complex character whose activities and achievements justify continual probing.

It is not impossible that this passion for building may be related to the legend of Caleb's descent from the Queen of Sheba and the Israelite king whose most important claim to fame rests upon his building of the Temple in Jerusalem. Caleb's ancestor, Menelik, Solomon's son and the first Israelite

king of Ethiopia, brought the Ark to Axum where it was housed in a sanctuary which superseded that of Jerusalem. Thus, building sanctuaries was an activity with which Solomon and Menelik were associated, and, if Caleb was involved deeply in the legend of Solomonic descent, as is likely, it is possible to explain his passion for building as derivative of his belief that he was the lineal descendant of those great builders whose traditions he wanted to maintain.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps in erecting these "Houses of the Lord" he might even have retained the vivid idea that had inspired the building of the first Temple of Solomon; namely, that it was a structure to house the Lord or His Ark. The relation of Caleb's building activity to the legend of Solomonic descent may receive support also from postbiblical literature, in which Solomon emerged as the great builder in many parts of the Near East to whom numerous structures were ascribed, including many in South Arabia itself in the pre-Islamic period. This would have provided the victorious negus and conqueror of South Arabia with an added incentive to emulate the example of his renowned ancestor in the very same country that had given birth to the Queen of Sheba, whose liaison with Solomon made possible Caleb's Israelite descent.

The very real possibility that Caleb was a convert to Christianity¹⁰⁷ may also be relevant to his church-building activity and to the destruction he is said to have inflicted upon the idols and the pagan temples of South Arabia. The fiery zeal which he brought to his activity reveals one who was not born a Christian but was a converted one, and who, for this reason, would therefore have retained the vivid experience of the original illumination. A graphic detail, mentioned incidentally in the *Martyrium Arethae*, section 38, best brings to light the hitherto obscure background of the convert. With his own hands he dug for seven days in the Royal Palace in Zafâr, laying the foundation for the Great Church of the Holy Trinity, and in so doing also hammered out for posterity a striking feature of his religious personality—the zeal, passion, and intensity of the dedicated convert.

In the lists of the Ethiopian kings Caleb bears a number of names, one of which is Constantine. In the context of this discussion that name may not, after all, be unauthentic, but a name given him by his contemporaries for a very good reason, namely, the striking similarity which obtained between the two rulers both as converts to Christianity and as great church builders, through whom Christianity was firmly established in Ethiopia and Byzantium respectively. And it could not have been entirely an accident that these men are the only two rulers of their respective empires who have become saints.

4. Caleb's Initiation of the Feast of the Martyrs: The preceding section has analyzed the accounts pertaining to Caleb's possible relationship to the Feast of the Martyrs. Whatever his exact share in the rise of their *cultus* is, there is no doubt whatever about the personal relationship which obtained between the victorious negus and the Martyrs of Najrân, and about the special position

¹⁰⁶ On this, see "Kebra Nagast," 146–57.

¹⁰⁷ *Martyrs*, 252–60.

these martyrs held in his consciousness.¹⁰⁸ He had landed in South Arabia as a military figure leading a crusade; his sojourn in Zafâr revealed the missionary within the crusader; but his journey to Najrân, the City of Martyrs, represented the climax, the Pilgrim's Progress on the road to the Arabian Calvary, where he erected a martyr in memoriam.

Caleb's erection of the *martyrium* during his pilgrimage at Najrân is as significant and revealing an act as that of laying the foundation for the Great Church of the Holy Trinity. His pilgrimage to the remains of the martyrs represents a confrontation between the martyr and the crusader, two types belonging to two different stages in the history of the church, the first belonging to the period of the persecuted church before the enunciation of the Edict of Milan, the second to the following period of the triumph of Christianity and its emergence as the state religion of the *Imperium Romanum*. The two stages belong to the diachronous stream of history, but by a curious conjunction of events they shared a synchronous existence in the South Arabia of the sixth century.

Caleb arrived too late to raise the siege of Najrân and to relieve its embattled Christians, but not too late to accord the martyrs posthumous honors. He erected for them a sepulchral church and established a feast in their honor, both of which probably represent the first stage in the ultimate canonization of the martyrs. Even if the feast was not an *agapé*, the erection of the *martyrium* admits of only one interpretation, since by definition it is a memorial sanctuary and an object of pilgrimage, indicating that the Najrânites who died for the Cross were considered, at least regionally, martyrs and saints, spontaneously canonized. But one must credit the Ethiopian negus with the measures that insured their official canonization which has endured till the present day and with the emergence of Najrân as a holy city in Arabia. Though Christian Najrân did not endure as long as the Feast did, it lasted for a century, until the rise of Islam. It was Caleb who was the first to take the road to Najrân as a pilgrim, and it was in his wake that the city became the resort of pilgrims in the Arabian peninsula. As the Arabian *martyropolis*, Najrân endured longer than all Caleb's other establishments in South Arabia, a witness to the religious character of his war as a crusade and a monument to his role in the history of Christianity among the Ethiopians of Eastern Africa as well as among the Arabs of Western Asia.

Although this summary of Caleb's achievement pertains primarily to his Arabian period, it has great relevance also for his post-Arabian one.¹⁰⁹ The detailed analysis in this section of the Arabian period and the elucidation of a number of its problems provide a clearer background for the post-Arabian era and justify treating it again in this new context.

¹⁰⁸ Caleb possibly knew St. Arethas personally, as may be inferred from the latter's own words in Simeon's *Letter S*, 509 lines 26 and 27, where he speaks of his having known the kings of other nations.

¹⁰⁹ Analyzed in "Kebra Nagast," 166-71.

In the examination of the passage in the *Martyrium Arethae* (sec. 39) on Caleb's abdication and his renunciation of the world, it has been argued that the account has no inherent improbability, that, on the contrary, it may be considered perfectly credible as a result of Caleb's keen disappointment at the loss of South Arabia to the rebel Abraha. The detailed examination of his South Arabian achievement supports the credibility of this account, in particular the part of it which has been considered legendary, that he not only became a monk but went to the extreme of living in absolute silence. This may, indeed, be a true account, and could be directly related to his achievement in South Arabia, reflecting how much South Arabia meant to the king. His renunciation was thus in direct proportion to the degree of his disappointment, which was great enough to drive him into the cloister. This was, after all, the period in the history of the church which witnessed outstanding examples of self-renunciation. In the preceding century St. Simeon had lived on the top of a pillar for some thirty years. Although monasticism itself began with St. Anthony in the Valley of the Nile, *not* in the upper Nile regions of Ethiopia, this country displayed such receptiveness to it in the fifth and sixth centuries that monasticism became one of the most distinctive and enduring features of Ethiopian Christianity until the present time.

Another problem is the question of Caleb's relation to Jerusalem. It has been considered not unlikely that after his abdication he dispatched his crown to be hung in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.¹¹⁰ The preceding analysis of the South Arabian phase in Caleb's life throws light on a related problem raised by the accounts of the *Kebra Nagast*, namely, that Caleb and Justin I met in Jerusalem and divided the *oikoumenê* between them. With this close examination of Caleb's career in South Arabia, his journey to Jerusalem does not sound so incredible. The pilgrim who rode from Zafâr to Najrân to erect the *martyrium* could have made the much more significant journey to the original *martyrium* at Golgotha, the Ethiopians being a Christian people for whom the pilgrimage to Jerusalem has always been one of the pillars of their faith. The account of this journey comes from the *Kebra Nagast*, but the *Martyrium Arethae*'s account of the dispatch of the crown to Jerusalem may be a corroborative echo. What seems to have caused scholars to reject the account of the *Kebra Nagast* concerning the journey is, of course, its setting, i.e., the meeting between the Byzantine *autokrator* and the Ethiopian negus for the division of the *oikoumenê*, certainly a fictitious story. Though the writer of the *Kebra Nagast* in his zeal placed Justin with Caleb in Jerusalem, the account should not be completely rejected. A kernel of truth may be extracted from it, that Caleb's journey to Jerusalem was not a business trip to divide the *oikoumenê* but a pilgrimage to worship at the Holy Sepulchre.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 171–72.

PART TWO: THE ARABIC SOURCES

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Of the various groups of sources, the Arabic ones have been the least appreciated. It is useful, therefore, to make a few observations on their status in general and to draw attention to some of the data they provide on Christian edifices in South Arabia.

The Arabic sources derive, at least in part, from an independent Arab or Arabian tradition and are not, therefore, simply secondary and derivative, dependent entirely upon Syriac and Greek ones.¹¹¹ The martyrdoms were, after all, events which took place in the Arabian peninsula itself, not in the distant and legendary past but in the full light of history, in the century preceding the rise of Islam. What is more, the most remarkable of these events took place in the strictly Arab area within the peninsula, namely, in the city of Najrân, peopled by a well-known Arab group, the Ḥārithids, who continued to play an important part in the history of the Arabs and the Arabian peninsula well into the Muslim period after their emigration from Najrân.¹¹² This alone argues that the traditions of the past must have remained alive in the consciousness of the Ḥārithids. Consequently, the Muslim historians could have availed themselves of this tradition either directly from the Ḥārithids, or indirectly from other sources aware of this tradition. That a fairly detailed account of the persecutions and martyrdoms must have existed at some time is apparent from the work of the Yamanite, al-Hamdânî. The table of contents of his *Iklîl* (*supra*, note 59) indicates that he treated the history of Ḥimyar in three separate sections, of which a portion of sections V and VI must have dealt with Najrân. Unfortunately, those parts are either lost irretrievably or awaiting discovery. They would be the *loci classici* for the history of this period in spite of the curious mixture of fact and fiction which seems to characterize the extant parts of Hamdânî's *Iklîl*.

¹¹¹ See Moberg's views in his introduction, *Book*, xxv, xliii–xlvi, partially corrected by J. Hirschberg, "Nestorian Sources of North-Arabian Traditions on the Establishment and Persecution of Christianity in Yemen," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* (Krakow, 1939–49), 334–35. Moberg did not consult all the relevant Arabic sources and seems to have based his judgment on the sources known or available to him. A single example may be given here to illustrate their independence of the Greek and Syriac ones. Arabic sources alone give the name of the Ḥimyarite king as Yûsuf, a name which does not appear at all in any of the non-Arabic sources in which it seems to have been suppressed. That this was the name assumed by the Ḥimyarite king has been proved beyond doubt by the discovery of the three Yûsuf inscriptions (*Martyrs*, 279). But in all fairness to Moberg it ought to be mentioned that the name Yûsuf was not epigraphically attested during his lifetime.

¹¹² E.g., the family of Banû-Makhlad, of whom may be mentioned Šâ'id ibn-Makhlad, the famous *wazīr* for two 'Abbasid caliphs, al-Mu'tamid and al-Muwaffaq, of the ninth century. They were descended from the Ḥārithids of Najrân. Šâ'id's brother, 'Abdûn, was a monk and died at the monastery of Qunna, situated not far from Baghdad. In his panegyrics on Šâ'id, Buḥturi, the 'Abbasid poet, does not omit mention of their distant but glorious past by references to Najrân, Madhḥij, and Ka'b ibn-'Amr: see Buḥturi, *Dîwân*, ed. Ḥasan K. al-Šayrafî (Cairo, 1963), I, 234, 235, 533. The Ḥārithid origin of Banû-Makhlad has been questioned, and it has been suggested that they were non-Arabs who affiliated themselves with the illustrious Ḥārithids; see D. Sourdel, *Le vizirat 'abbâside de 749 à 936* (Damascus, 1959), I, 309–22; II, 748.

On Najrân as an Arab city, see *Martyrs*, 243; on the Ḥārithids, *ibid.*, 11, 39, 125.

Most of these sources were written long after these events had taken place and a special technique is needed for the extraction of historical data from them. This should not unduly diminish their value, which, though considerable, has either been overlooked or taken for granted.¹¹³ These sources partly confirm and partly supplement the accounts of the non-Arabic sources, while they are the most important sources and indeed the only ones available for the history of Najrân and the Hârithids after the persecutions, in pre-Islamic, Muḥammadan, and Islamic times.

Even for the period of the persecutions and the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia, these sources are informative on the problem of Christian edifices with which the *Vita* deals, and they will, therefore, be drawn upon for information which has either not been noted or not appreciated. Passages have been carefully selected which are likely to be either true or which derive from a reliable tradition, and which can be interlocked with the non-Arabic primary sources for this period.

These sources have preserved echoes of the existence of Christian places of worship in South Arabia, confirming the non-Arabic sources. Both Dînawarî and Iṣfahânî speak in general terms of the destruction of Christian churches in South Arabia while relating the antecedents of the Ethiopian invasion.¹¹⁴ It is, however, in their specific references that these sources contribute significantly to the history of Christian places of worship in South Arabia.¹¹⁵ These references are most abundant regarding Najrân, confirming the central position of that city in South Arabian Christianity, as reflected in the *Book* and the *Martyrium Arethae*. They also provide some valuable information on the influence of Najrân upon the rise and development of similar structures in the Fertile Crescent, whether supported by their Ghassânid relatives in Syria or by their own trans-Arabian colonies in that region after the dispersion of the Najrânite community in the seventh century. These references to the Najrânite colonies in the Fertile Crescent are valuable for supplementing and illuminating the accounts of Christian structures in the metropolis itself.

¹¹³ See I. Shahîd, "The Last Days of Salîh," *Arabica*, 5 (1958), 154–56.

¹¹⁴ Dînawarî, *al-Akhhbâr al-Ṭiwāl*, ed. 'A. 'Amir and J. Shayyâl (Cairo, 1960), 62; Iṣfahânî, *Aghânî* (*supra*, note 37), XVII, 224.

Noteworthy is a reference in the work of the antiquarian Hamdânî, who speaks of a rock church near Qarya still to be seen when he wrote his work; see Hamdânî, *Sifat* (*supra*, note 70), 297. Qarya, situated to the north or northeast of Najrân, is nowadays called al-Fâw. The site has been recently excavated by Dr. A. al-Anṣârî of the University of Riyadh, who discovered *inter alia* fairly long inscriptions conceived in Arabic and written in the Sabaic script. These inscriptions (and others) confirm my position that the Arabs of the South, including those of Najrân, did indeed write their language, Arabic, in the Musnad, the Sabaic script; see the discussion in *Martyrs*, 242–50. These inscriptions will appear in the *Proceedings of the First International Symposium on the History of Arabia* (held at Riyadh in April 1977).

¹¹⁵ It is interesting that these sources also speak of the work of destruction inflicted upon the buildings of Ḥimyarite South Arabia by the invading Ethiopians. The list of destroyed buildings varies slightly with each author: e.g., in Hamdânî the list consists of Salhîn and Baynûn; in Iṣfahânî and in Ibn-Hishâm it consists of Salhîn, Baynûn, and Ghumdân. The list may not be accurate regarding the number or the names of the buildings involved. What is important is that these sources recorded their destruction; see Hamdânî, *Iḥlîl* (*supra*, note 59), 226; Iṣfahânî, *Aghânî* (*supra*, note 37), XVII, 225–27; Ibn-Hishâm, *Sîrat*, ed. M. M. 'Abdulḥamîd (Cairo, 1937), I, 37.

I. NAJRÂN

These sources seem to contain conflicting statements concerning Christian places of worship in Najrân. This is only natural since they were written after the disestablishment of Christianity there in the seventh century by historians who were not Christians and were unfamiliar with church architecture or distinctions between a martyr, a monastery, and a church. Once this is realized, the conflicting statements in these sources can be reconciled and as a result made to yield a perfectly intelligible picture of a city which was adorned with three types of Christian structures, namely, churches, *martyria*, and monasteries. This picture is consonant with that presented by the *Martyrium Arethae* which in section 38 singles out Najrân as the city where not one but two types of structures, a church and a *martyrium*, were erected.

The Church

The original church, burnt by the Ḥimyarite king, is mentioned in the Arabic sources; the history of Iṣfahânî may be singled out, since it refers to *one* church in such a way¹¹⁶ as to confirm the account of the *Book* that only one church was burnt in Najrân. Arab accounts of the restored church after the Ethiopian occupation are not plentiful and are usually mixed up with stories of the martyrs. The Byzantine contribution to the building of churches in Najrân receives some attention in the sources; according to these works it consisted of financial support from the emperors¹¹⁷ and of the dispatch of mosaic cubes.¹¹⁸ An actual description of the church is not included in these sources; but the description of the Najrânite church in Syria written by Yâqût, who speaks enthusiastically of its beauty and refers to its columns and mosaics, may be suggestive.¹¹⁹ Whether this church in Syria was a duplicate of that in South Arabia is difficult to tell. The beauty of the churches, noted in these sources, recalls the term περικαλλιστάτην, reserved by the hagiographer for the church of Najrân.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ His exact term is *bī'atahum* (their church) in the singular to which is attached the pronominal suffix *hum*. On the same page he reverts to the plural and uses the term *kanâ'isahum* (their churches) or *al-kanâ'is* (the churches), but this could very well be the term describing the destruction of churches in the South Arabian region rather than in Najrân; Iṣfahânî, *Aghâni*, 224.

¹¹⁷ See, for instance, al-Nuwayrî, quoting Ibn-Iṣhâq, in *Nihâyat al-Arab* (Cairo, 1954).

¹¹⁸ Al-Bakrî, *Mu'jam*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1877), 756, quoted by H. Lammens, in "Yazid et les Nâgrannites," *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Université Saint-Joseph*, 5, 2 (1912), 660 note 1, but Lammens' page reference to Bakrî is inaccurate. He may have had in mind p. 367 which mentions Dayr Najrân, the monastery of Najrân. However, the reference to mosaics in the same passage which describes the *dayr* is not to that *dayr* (the monastery) but to the *biya'* (the churches) of Najrân, whose walls and ceilings according to Bakrî were decorated with mosaics and gold. As an example of confusion in terms, see also Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1867), II, 703, who quotes this passage on the churches of Najrân to describe the monasteries, the *diyârât*.

The dispatch of mosaic cubes to Najrân in pre-Islamic times should be taken into account in the discussion of the problem of the mosaics of Umayyad mosques.

¹¹⁹ Yâqût, *op. cit.*, III, 758; and *infra*, p. 79.

¹²⁰ Yâqût, *op. cit.*, II, 703; see also *supra*, p. 39.

The Martyrium

The complex character of Christian religious architecture which sometimes combined structures of different types, e.g. *martyrium-basilica*, explains the apparent contradictions of the Arabic sources in their references to the *martyrium* of Najrân, which seems to have been conceived of as a monastery, as a church, and as a place of pilgrimage. The essential features of this famous *martyrium*, however, emerge clearly from references both in contemporary pre-Islamic poetry and in later Islamic works.

It is perfectly clear from collating these sources and setting them against the picture of religious architecture in the sixth century that the famed "Ka'ba of Najrân" was of the type that may be described as the square, domical *martyrium*.¹²¹

The Dome, referred to in Arabic as *Qubba*, was sometimes a conical, tent-like structure, very frequently used by the Arabs in pre-Islamic times on important occasions such as the accommodation of royalty, noble women, judges, and arbiters of disputes.¹²² And it is quite likely that such *Qubbas* were used in Najrân itself; according to the sources, Najrân was the seat of some famous arbiters among the pre-Islamic Arabs, such as al-Af'â ibn al-Af'â al-Jurhumî.¹²³ But there can be little doubt that in the case of the Ka'ba of Najrân, the *Qubba* was none other than the geometrical hemisphere which Christian religious architecture borrows from imperial Roman design as the distinctive symbol of martyrial structures.¹²⁴ It is of interest that this dome was neither of wood nor of stone but of leather, for which Najrân was celebrated. For the construction of the dome three hundred pieces of hide were used, according to the sources (see Işfahânî, *Aghâni*, XII, 7).

The Square or Cube, mentioned in the Arab sources, was the structure upon which the dome rested.¹²⁵ Probably this lower structure gave rise to the term

¹²¹ For the basic work, see A. Grabar, *Martyrium* (Paris, 1946); for the dome, see E. Baldwin Smith, *The Dome* (Princeton, 1950), esp. 105–8, on the square domical *martyrium*.

¹²² See also Smith, *op. cit.*, 43–44, 60, 83–84. This discussion of the Dome of Najrân and of the Qalîs below should be of interest to historians of Arab and Arabian architecture.

¹²³ Ya'qûbî, *Târîkh* (Beirut, 1960), I, 223; Hamdânî, *Ihlâl* (*supra*, note 59), VIII, 202, on al-Qalammas, the Af'â of Najrân; particularly interesting is Ibn-Ḥabîb, who states that this arbiter, Af'â, was the ancestor from whom were descended the famous *sayyid* and *'aqib* of Najrân who came to Muḥammad at Madîna; Ibn-Ḥabîb, *al-Muḥabbar*, ed. I. Lichtenstadter (Hyderabad, 1942), 132. Of considerable interest and relevance to the statement in Ibn-Ḥabîb is the appearance of the same name "Af'û" as part of the patronymic of the refugee 'Abdullâh in the *Book* (23b, 24a) and also the further statement that Af'û had been an ambassador; see Moberg's note, *Book*, lxxvi. It should also be noted that the Banû-'Abdulmadân, who emerged in the sixth century as members of the most important clan of the Ḥârithids of Najrân, called themselves also Banû-al-Dayyân, "the sons of the Judge."

¹²⁴ Cf. Lammens, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), 659–60, who writes as though the *Qubba* had been a pagan tabernacle before it was replaced by a Christian church. Lammens does not distinguish the church from the *martyrium*; the Arabic sources, too, did not. See Yâqût, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), IV, 756, where he speaks of the *Ka'ba* (the cube) as the *bî'a* (the church) and then quotes Ibn al-Kalbî on its being a dome; see also *ibid.*, II, 703, where he speaks of the *dayr* (monastery) as the square or cubic structure. Ibn al-Kalbî himself seemingly contradicts this statement attributed by Yâqût to him, stating that the *Ka'ba* was said to be a *ghurfa*, an upper chamber or an inner chamber. See Ibn al-Kalbî, *The Book of Idols*, ed. N. A. Faris (Princeton, 1952), 38–39. See *infra*, pp. 81–82, for an explanation of these contradictions. On the domical square *martyrium*, see *supra*.

¹²⁵ See preceding note.

Ka'ba as a designation for the *martyrium*, a doubly suitable term describing both its geometrical shape and its function as an object of pilgrimage.¹²⁶ *Ka'ba* is, therefore, a more significant term than *Qubba*, which in this context merely signifies a geometrical or an architectural concept.

This *cube* is further described as an elevated structure to which access was gained by a step (*daraja*) or, more likely, by a flight of stairs (Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, II, 703). The elevated position of the cube tallies with Ibn-al-Kalbî's statement that the *Ka'ba* of Najrân was a *ghurf*, a term which *inter alia* means an elevated chamber (*supra*, note 124).

Two poems by the pre-Islamic poet, al-A'shâ, furnish some important details. In addition to his use of the term *Ka'ba*, he speaks of the *abwâb* (doors) of the *Ka'ba*.¹²⁷ If the poet was reporting accurately what he had undoubtedly seen in person and was not laboring under stress of a metrical exigency, it could be inferred from his use of the plural *abwâb* that the cubic structure had more than one door, possibly four, one for each side of the square. In another poem, where he speaks of his visit to Najrân, he refers to the *Mihrâb*, most probably in a reference to the *Ka'ba* (A'shâ, *Dîwân*, 215). The term, which in Islamic architectural terminology came to mean the niche of a mosque, had meant something else in pre-Islamic times.¹²⁸ From the context of its occurrence in this poem, it may be inferred that the *Mihrâb* was a chamber crowded with visitors, possibly the shrine of the sanctuary. This interpretation of A'shâ's description tallies with the description of the *Ka'ba* by Ibn-al-Kalbî as a *ghurf*, since this term means an inner chamber or an elevated chamber (*supra*, note 124).

What decoration this *martyrium* contained can only be arrived at by analogy. The sources speak of the Christian edifices of Najrân—its churches and monasteries—as sumptuously furnished and decorated with silk brocade (*dîbâj*), precious metals, and mosaics (Yâqût, *Mu'jam al-Buldân*, II, 703). It is natural to suppose that this decoration applies to the *martyrium* as well as to the churches and monasteries. It is also possible that the *martyrium* had some statues and paintings; the famous *Ka'ba* of Mecca, also a place of pilgrimage in pre-Islamic

¹²⁶ It is possible that Najrân had in its pre-Christian times a *Ka'ba* which was a place of pilgrimage for the pagan Arabs of the neighborhood. But this should be sharply distinguished from the *Ka'ba* which these Arabic sources describe and which was certainly not a pagan but a Christian shrine.

In 1936 S. J. Philby visited the oasis of Najrân and discovered what he called "The *Ka'ba* of Najrân" on Taslâl Hill. But his discovery of the site there is more important than his interpretation of what the site stood for. If the remains are those of a pagan sanctuary, then they should not be identified with the *Ka'ba* of the sixth and the seventh centuries, since this was not a pagan but a Christian sanctuary. Of particular interest to the present discussion is his reference to the palatial buildings inside the fortress of Ukhdûd, which he suspected may have been a "domed structure, possibly the Christian cathedral of which we hear or an earlier pagan temple." See S. J. Philby, *Arabian Highlands* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1952), 220–24, 266. See also G. Ryckmans, in *Le Muséon*, 74 (1961), 219–20.

Philby devoted more than a hundred pages to the description of Najrân and Ukhdûd with maps and illustrations, which may be consulted with profit (*ibid.*, 213–319). See also *ibid.*, 315–18, for a review of the accounts of J. Halevy's visit to Najrân in 1870.

¹²⁷ *Dîwân al-A'shâ al-Kabîr*, ed. M. Husayn (Cairo, 1950), 173, 215.

¹²⁸ On the term *Mihrâb*, see *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (*supra*, note 90), 343; and R. Sergeant, "Mihrab," *BSOAS*, 21 (1959), 439–53.

Arabia, had them. The paintings, presumed by analogy to have been in the *martyrium*, may reflect an Ethiopian influence, at any rate initially. According to the sources,¹²⁹ the Ethiopians liked to have paintings in their commemorative structures, a practice which may have been extended to this Arabian *martyrium*, since an Ethiopian, the negus himself, erected the original building.

From a statement in Iṣfahânî (*Aghânî*, XII, 7) that the *Qubba* was near a river called al-Nuḥayrdân, it may be inferred that the *martyrium* was *extra muros*. This tallies well not only with what is implied in the *Book* on the place near the valley where the martyrs were killed and buried, but also with some statements in other Arabic sources to the effect that the Najrânites used to ride their mounts¹³⁰ to visit their religious establishments, implying that at least some of these were outside the city walls.

The festivities which usually attended the feasts of the Christian martyrs must have been celebrated at Najrân. In his account of Dayr Najrân, Yâqût most probably describes a procession to the *martyrium*¹³¹ rather than to the monastery (Yâqût, *Muʿjam al-Buldân*, II, 703). He states that the Ḥârithids, sumptuously attired, used to ride their mounts on Sundays and Feast Days, say their prayers at these religious establishments, and then proceed to their festive retreats where the delegations and the poets would visit them.

One of these poets was the famous al-Aʿshâ whose poems have already been considered in connection with the structural features of the *martyrium*. These poems also describe the lighter side of the life of Christian Najrân,¹³² most probably the ceremonies which accompanied the feast of its martyrs.

The glowing colors with which these festivities are painted in the Arabic sources require an explanation.¹³³ No doubt their origin is to be sought in the communal meal on the feast day of the martyrs and the fact that the Christian church in those days was also a center of social life. But to this must be added a number of other contributing factors. First, the Arab ideal of *murûʿa* (virtue) included as one of its main constituents hospitality, and so the *martyrium* to which the visitors repaired became also a guest house, offering hospitality in

¹²⁹ See Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqât al-Kubrâ* (Beirut, 1957), II, 239–42.

¹³⁰ Yâqût, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), II, 703. The antecedent of the pronominal suffix *hâ* in *yar-kabûna ilayhâ* (they ride to them) is the *diyârât* (the monasteries). See *supra*, note 124, regarding the confused terminology used for various types of Christian edifices. In this very passage, Yâqût speaks of the cube as a *dayr*, then speaks of *biyaʿ* (the churches), and also of the *diyârât* (the monasteries) in terms which suggest that his descriptions, too, are interchangeable and applicable equally well to the three types of edifices. In this same passage Yâqût, speaking of riding out to the *diyârât* (monasteries), describes processions on Sundays and Feast Days, and this is suggestive of a procession to a pilgrim's shrine, located *extra muros*, rather than to a monastery.

¹³¹ See the preceding note. The *martyrium* is the more likely destination for a procession of the kind described. It is possible that a monastery was built near the *martyrium* to which those taking part in the procession repaired after performing the pilgrimage. Hence, the reference to a monastery in Yâqût's account.

¹³² The poet speaks of flowers (e.g., jasmine), female singers (*al-musmiʿât*), lute strings (*quṣṣâb*), and drinking places (*mashrabât*). See *Dîwân* (*supra*, note 127), 173.

¹³³ The writers of these works display a basic misunderstanding of the significance of the festivities involved, no doubt on account of the music and the drinking of wine. The same misunderstanding vitiates their descriptions of monasteries and monastic life, for which see Shâbushtî, *Kitâb al-Diyârât*, ed. G. ʿAwwâd (Baghdad, 1966). That these festivities might have gone a little too far is quite likely. The early church was aware of the necessity of controlling such excesses, for which see Baldwin Smith, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 121), 133 notes 2 and 3.

honor of the dead. Second, as the *martyrium* became an object of pilgrimage not only for the Najrânites but also for the neighboring Arabs, it was natural that it should develop into an establishment catering too to those visitors who did not reside at Najrân but came from faraway places. Hospitality became one of the duties of the custodians of the *martyrium* in much the same way that a similar *rifâda* for the pilgrims at Mecca became part of the duties of *Quraysh*. These factors could also be set against the character of Najrân as a great, green oasis celebrated for its fruits, cuisine,¹³⁴ and climate, a city which must have seemed a veritable paradise to the Arabs who came to visit the shrine from the less favored *Arabia Deserta*. No wonder, then, that those who visited the shrine, especially gay poets such as al-A'shâ, could not fail sometimes to remember vividly the more hedonistic aspects of Najrân's social life to the detriment of other more important aspects of the spiritual life of this Arabian *martyropolis*.

Possibly connected with the celebration of the Feast of the Martyrs is the practice of mourning for the dead to which Hamdânî refers in his *Şifat* (p. 203). In his short statement on *Mawâđi' al-Niyâha* (the places of mourning for the dead) he mentions, among other places, Najrân and the whole of the country of *Madhij* (to which the *Hârithids* of Najrân belonged). He does not say whether this was in connection with the martyrs, but it could very well have been a tradition which went back to those times. The pre-Islamic Arabs mourned for their dead, and elegies formed an important part of the corpus of pre-Islamic poetry. It is, therefore, quite likely that the indigenous Arab practice of mourning for the dead and the Christian Feast, which commemorated the passion of the martyrs, were united in the case of the martyrs of Najrân and gave rise to a tradition of mourning which lasted into the times of Hamdânî, possibly transformed and applied to new situations and personalities with the lapse of time. Hamdânî also says that among the male performers, the *Mawâlî*, i.e., the non-Arabs, employ "wonderful melodies." This reference to the *Mawâlî* suggests foreign influence, and this could point to some Christian or Byzantine influence from the sixth century, related to the Feast of the Martyrs. If correctly interpreted, this tradition of mournful singing mentioned by Hamdânî takes its place as the Arab contribution to hymns in honor of the martyrs of Najrân, which include the Syriac *sûgîtâs* of the sixth century, the Greek hymn to Najrân in the *Martyrium Arethae*, and possibly the "Chapter of the Constellations" in the *Qur'ân*.

More important than all the details concerning the *martyrium* which are of interest to the art historian is its place in the religious, social, and cultural life of the Arabs in pre-Islamic times. First, as an object of pilgrimage, the *martyrium* became the most important Christian shrine in pre-Islamic Arabia whither flocked the Christian Arabs of the region. Speaking of the pilgrimage to Najrân, Bakrî¹³⁵ states that "those who performed it were the *Hârithids* and those groups among the Arabs who did not observe the Sacred Months

¹³⁴ Hamdânî, *Şifat* (*supra*, note 70), 360; al-Qâli, *Dhayl al-Amâli* (Beirut, n.d.), 38.

¹³⁵ Bakrî, *op. cit.*, 367.

and did not perform the pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba* [of Mecca]; and the whole of *Khath'am* used to perform the pilgrimage to it [Najrân]." Second, the *martyrium* was considered an inviolable sanctuary for anyone who sought protection, refuge, or aid—the *khâ'if* and the *mustajîr*.¹³⁶ This is in perfect harmony with its description as an asylum in the *Martyrium Arethae* (section 38), which function it owed to the Ethiopian Negus Caleb. Finally, the *martyrium* was a shrine at which the needs and requests of those who came to it were fulfilled.¹³⁷ These needs and requests are not specified, but the use of the term *mustarfid* (the one who appeals for help or support) could in this case suggest that the *martyrium* functioned as a hospice for the wayfarer; if so, this could be an extension of the practice of the communal meals served during the Feast of the Martyrs and of catering to the pilgrims during this season. The term *tâlibu hâjatin* is a very general one, but in this context it may imply *inter alia* the practice of making vows, common at shrines. This interpretation could be supported by the popularity of making vows at the church of the Najrânite colony in Syria, where this practice could very well have been transplanted from the metropolis in South Arabia.¹³⁸

The custodianship of the *martyrium* was in the hands of the *Hârithids* (*Balharith*), the group to whom the chief martyr, *Hârith* (*Arethas*), belonged. This is consonant with what the *Martyrium Arethae* says in section 38. A'shâ, the contemporary poet who visited the 'Abdulmadânids, notes three members of this family, namely, Yazîd, 'Abdulmasîh, and Qays, as the *arbâb* (the lords) of the *martyrium*. This custodianship of the most important shrine and sanctuary enhanced the prestige of the 'Abdulmadânids in the eyes of the pre-Islamic Arabs and enabled them to play a very significant though little-known role in the history of the Arabs before the rise of Islam.

A'shâ's visit to Najrân may be assigned approximately to the year 600 or possibly slightly later. This leads to the observation that the descriptions of the *martyrium* in the sources which have been drawn upon for this discussion most probably apply to the *martyrium* of the same period as A'shâ's visit, i.e., approximately a century after the erection of the original structure ca. 520. It is reasonable to suppose that it was in the intervening hundred years that the original structure must have received those architectural refinements which made the *martyrium* so impressive to the Arabs of pre-Islamic times and so memorable to those of the Muslim period.¹³⁹

The Monastery

There can be no doubt that late in the sixth and early in the seventh century Najrân had its monastery or monasteries. This is demonstrated by references

¹³⁶ Isfahânî, *Aghânî* (*supra*, note 37), XI, 359.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹³⁸ For Syrian Najrân, see *infra*, p. 79.

¹³⁹ Al-Jahîz includes the Ka'ba of Najrân in the list of impressive monumental buildings with which the Arabs could be credited, structures comparable to those erected by the Persians; see his *al-Hayawân*, ed. 'A. M. Hârûn (Cairo, 1938), I, 72.

in the sources to Dayr Najrân,¹⁴⁰ to "the two monks of Najrân";¹⁴¹ to monasteries in the Fertile Crescent built by the dispersed Najrânite community;¹⁴² to monks as delegates who came to Muḥammad at Medina;¹⁴³ and to the institution itself, *rahbāniya*, in Muḥammad's covenant¹⁴⁴ with the Najrânites. How far back monasticism at Najrân can be traced is difficult to determine. There is a reference to nuns in Simeon's *Letter G*,¹⁴⁵ but it is fleeting and leaves it an open question whether the monastery had made its appearance in Najrân ca. 520. The existence of a community of "sons and daughters of the covenant" in Najrân at the time of the persecution¹⁴⁶ might indicate the inception of the institution, although how this community was organized is still not very clear. Monasticism probably started about this time or shortly after the Ethiopian-Himyarite war in the twenties of the sixth century. And no doubt it received an impetus from the neighboring regions of the Near East where it was spreading with great rapidity; witness the building of monasteries by the Ghassânids in Syria and possibly by Caleb himself in Ethiopia, which experienced a rapid development of its monastic system in this period.¹⁴⁷

That the monastery must have played an important part in the life of Christian Najrân is reflected in the fact that the Muslim historians of later times quite often refer to the most famous Christian edifice of Najrân, the church and the *martyrium*, simply as "Dayr Najrân," the monastery of Najrân.¹⁴⁸

The Mosque of 'Abdullâh

Since both the ancient historians and modern travelers testify to the existence of the Mosque of 'Abdullâh in Najrân, this edifice, although a Muslim mosque and not a Christian church, should be included in this discussion of Christian edifices in Najrân.¹⁴⁹ The 'Abdullâh after whom the mosque was named was undoubtedly a Christian who figured largely in the persecutions. Although his exact identity has not yet been determined,¹⁵⁰ there is no question about his Christianity. The original edifice upon which the later Muslim mosque was built must have been a monastery, a church, or a *martyrium*. It is a valuable,

¹⁴⁰ Yâqût, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), II, 703.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 667.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 704.

¹⁴³ Balâdhuri, *Futûḥ al-Buldân*, ed. S. Munajjid (Cairo, 1956), I, 76.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴⁵ *Martyrs*, 54 line 7.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 54, 250–51.

¹⁴⁷ In this connection it might be pointed out that one of the laws attributed to St. Gregentius, no. 60, treats of those who wish to remain virgins and those who wish to lead a celibate life (*Leges*, col. 614).

¹⁴⁸ For the confusion of terms, see *supra*, notes 118, 130.

¹⁴⁹ For 'Abdullâh's grave and mosque, see the reference in Hirschberg, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 111), 327 note 11.

¹⁵⁰ Caussin de Perceval thought "Abdullah" was perhaps the name of the chief martyr, while Hârith was that of his tribe; see his *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'islamisme* (Paris, 1847–48), I, 129.

extant witness to something remarkable which must have befallen 'Abdullâh, possibly his passion, and, if so, the original edifice is likely to have been a *martyrium*, if not the main one in Najrân, perhaps one of the smaller martyries with which the city and the neighboring region must have been dotted.¹⁵¹ Reference to the site of the Mosque of 'Abdullâh is a valuable contribution to the Christian topography of pre-Islamic Najrân and illustrates the transformation of churches into mosques, a process which can be traced in other localities of South Arabia.¹⁵²

II. THE DIASPORA

During the caliphate of 'Umar (634–44) the Christians of Najrân were dispersed, and most of them settled in a new Najrân not far from Kûfa in Iraq, sometimes referred to as al-Najrânîya.^{152a} Although most of the references to al-Najrânîya are related to economic and political history, there are one or two echoes which bear on the subject of Christian edifices.

There is a reference to the Najrânites' building a church (*kanîsa*), which they named al-Ukayrâh.¹⁵³ The reference is interesting, for it is an example of how the sources use the terms monastery and church interchangeably. The name, deriving from the Syriac *kūrḥā* (the monk's cell) but used in Arabic as a plural in the diminutive, should signify a *coenobium*. Since the monastery had its own conventual church, the sources probably confused this with the congregational church and so referred to the monastery as a *kanîsa*, a church.¹⁵⁴ The building of al-Ukayrâh could argue for the existence of a similar establishment in South Arabian Najrân, which the newly arrived community wanted to perpetuate through the new structure.

Most tantalizing is the possibility that the dispersed community carried with it the relics of the chief female martyr, Ruhayma,¹⁵⁵ to Iraq, where they were deposited in a new site over which a new *martyrium* was built. The translation of the relics of Ruhayma for a new *depositio* was, of course, possible, since it is known from the *Book* and *Letter G* of Simeon that she was not buried together with the other women martyrs but was given the distinction of a separate burial. Consequently, her relics could easily be distinguished from others. Furthermore, because of her standing in the city, it is quite likely that she, as well as Ḥârith, was accorded special honors after the Ethiopian victory and that this was reflected in a chapel or a *martyrium* erected *in memoriam*.

¹⁵¹ See Philby, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 126), 267–68, who says that 'Abdullâh's shrine until very recently was visited by "believers in the dead saint's efficacy as an interceder"; see also 238–39 and map 266.

¹⁵² E.g., Masjid Jarjis in Tarîm, for which see *infra*, pp. 85–86.

^{152a} On al-Najrânîya, see J. M. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* (Beirut, 1968), III, 226–30.

¹⁵³ Yâqût, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), IV, 758. The name occurs also in connection with Christian edifices in the work of Bakrî (*op. cit.* [*supra*, note 118], 95), where it is the name for localities at which monasteries were built. The name itself is more likely to have been acquired in the new Aramaic-speaking environment in Iraq.

¹⁵⁴ It could also have been a monastery-church complex.

¹⁵⁵ For Ruhayma, see *Martyrs*, 54, 57–60.

The preceding suggestion on the possible translation of Ruhayma's remains derives support from what is known about a place near the Iraqi Najrân, called al-Ruhayma, which has been the subject of a sociological and economic study by A. M. Ali.¹⁵⁶ Luckily, the author of this work has included a description of the region around al-Ruhayma and has recorded the local traditions of its inhabitants in the course of a brief account of its history in Muslim times. From the material he has collected, it is possible to support the suggestion that the locality known as al-Ruhayma is none other than a settlement of the dispersed Najrânites at which they erected a *martyrium* for Ruhayma.

The surrounding area belonged to the great Christian center of Ḥīra, full of Christian remains and associations. Even nowadays, the names of the localities around al-Ruhayma suggest a South Arabian origin. To the east of it there are traces of a spring by the name of Ḥimyarġân (the place of Ḥimyar) (Ali, *Ruhayma*, 8). To the west there is Ghâr Dihâm (the cave of Dihâm); Dihâm could stand for Rihâm, a variant of Ruhayma.¹⁵⁷ Al-Ruhbân (the monks) is an area which belongs geographically and administratively to al-Ruhayma. According to the author, it is a very old town with many antique remains as yet untouched (Ali, *Ruhayma*, 9). Near Ruhayma there is the 'Ayn al-Ruhayma (the Spring of Ruhayma), which supplies the village with water and irrigates the region; it goes back to very ancient times (*ibid.*, 11).

The toponymy and the geography of the region suggest that the South Arabian community of Najrân settled in a land which, as skilled farmers from South Arabia, they were able to cultivate.¹⁵⁸

More important is what the author of this study says concerning a tomb about one kilometer to the west of al-Ruhayma; it is said to be the tomb of the daughter of al-Ḥasan,¹⁵⁹ the son of the Caliph 'Ali. This tomb is a shrine visited by the villagers, who associate with it many miraculous happenings. They account for the existence of the tomb at that particular spot by relating it to a nearby palace which al-Ḥasan is said to have had there, and to a very old tree where al-Ḥasan used to tie his horse. For the villagers, the antiquity of the tree is not open to question and they attribute to it miracles of some sort. For this reason they avoid using it for firewood (Ali, *Ruhayma*, 17-18).

The author himself is doubtful of the explanations provided by the villagers for the sanctity of the tomb and the tree. He says that history does not record that al-Ḥasan had a palace in that spot, although he used to pass through it on his way from Medina to visit the tomb of his father in al-Najaf. Thus, the association of the sanctity of the tomb with al-Ḥasan is far from certain. If its sanctity cannot be related to its association with al-Ḥasan and his daughter,

¹⁵⁶ Abdurrahim M. Ali, *Al-Ruhayma* (Baghdad, 1966).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8, as in the Syriac sources, where the name of the female martyr, Ruma, appears as Duma. Here Dihâm is unvocalized and could also be transliterated as Duham or Dahâm.

¹⁵⁸ The antiquity of the human settlement in that area is also demonstrated by what the author says concerning the many antique remains which he himself saw; he refers in particular to a place called *al-Gsâr*, the palaces or castles, half a kilometer away from al-Ruhayma, which the local population claims to be the remains of ancient palaces (Ali, *Al-Ruhayma*, 17).

¹⁵⁹ For al-Ḥasan, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (*supra*, note 19), III, 240-43.

it may very well have been associated with Ruhayma and the martyrs of Najrân. This suggestion is supported by the following considerations.

First, the tomb is supposed to be that of a woman, and this is not as common in Islam as it is in Christianity. Second, the presumed Muslim lady is left anonymous, which is significant; but there is no doubt about the martyrdom of a Najrânite lady, Ruhayma, whose people are known to have migrated to that area and who must have carried with them the relics of their martyrs. The name of the village, al-Ruhayma, also argues for the South Arabian martyr; it is an uncommon name, and this makes rather remote the possibility that the village was named after some other Ruhayma. Finally, it is noteworthy that local tradition relates the shrine to the history of the seventh century shortly after the death of the Caliph 'Ali in 661, i.e., only a few years after the dispersion of the Najrânite community, its emigration to Iraq, and its settling in the vicinity of al-Ruhayma.

The lady's tomb at the modern village of al-Ruhayma could very well be that of the celebrated martyr. If true, it balances the Mosque of 'Abdullâh at the other end of the Arabian peninsula at Najrân, both the memorial mosque and the memorial tomb being examples of Christian shrines which later came to be venerated by the Muslim Arabs.

Although the Najrânîya in Iraq was the main center to which the Christians of Najrân emigrated from South Arabia, many of them settled also in the western part of the Fertile Crescent in Syria. This was indeed the more receptive region, since, unlike Iraq, it was an area where the Monophysite persuasion was widely spread. Moreover, Syria had been in the sphere of influence of their relatives, the Ghassânids. Intercourse and commerce had been brisk between Najrân and the Ghassânids in pre-Islamic times, and it was, therefore, natural that many of the Najrânites should have emigrated to the former Ghassânid territory.

An explicit reference to their settling there is provided by Balâdhurî, who speaks of the tax imposed on the Najrânites of Iraq and how their chief used to send his representatives to the Najrânites, resident in Syria, to collect their contributions.¹⁶⁰ Another statement in Bakrî's *Mu'jam* confirms the presence of the Najrânites in Syria. The author speaks of the locality al-Jawâbî as one of the places of al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b, i.e., the Ḥārithids of Najrân.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, it has been thought that al-Jawâbî was a poetic name for al-Jâbiya, the capital of the Ghassânids,¹⁶² but this is unlikely.

The emigration of the Najrânites to Syria can also be inferred from the toponymy of the region which also provides relevant information regarding their places of worship. Some of these toponyms may remain controversial in the context of this discussion, but two of them are less so, namely, Najrân and Dayr Najrân.

¹⁶⁰ Balâdhurî, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 143), 80.

¹⁶¹ Bakrî, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), 257.

¹⁶² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II, 360.

Najrân: This is a town in central Syria, in the Lajâ (Trachonitis), clearly named after the South Arabian Najrân,¹⁶³ just as the Iraqi one was so named. Yâqût describes its church, *bî'a*, as "great, beautiful, built upon marble columns, and decorated with mosaics. It is a blessed place to which both Muslims and Christians make vows."

It is natural to suppose that the church, described by Yâqût, was either built by the emigrant community or was associated with Najrânites, possibly through relics which were translated from Najrân.¹⁶⁵ Although the description does not justify drawing a conclusion as to whether its architecture followed models in Syria or those in South Arabia, it is noteworthy that Yâqût considers it "beautiful," an epithet which recalls that of the *Vita* (*supra*, p. 39), describing the church of Najrân as περικαλλιστάτην. Important also is the character of the church as a votive shrine, which clearly indicates that the relics of some saints or martyrs, possibly from South Arabian Najrân, must have been carried north by the community. It is interesting to note that the church as a votive shrine appealed to both Muslims and Christians, an instance of Christian-Muslim symbiosis. This common appeal may be traced back to pre-Islamic days, when the Arabs used to make vows to the saints of the place or of the region and continued to do so after the Islamization of Syria. In the case of vows to the saints of Najrân in Islamic times, the practice was probably facilitated by the fact that the martyrs were Arabs with whom those who made the vows had a certain affinity.

Dayr Najrân—Monastery of Najrân: Yâqût clearly distinguishes this edifice from the preceding one, since he uses the term *dayr* (monastery) in referring to it while he uses *bî'a* (church) in describing the edifice in Syrian Najrân. Moreover, this *dayr* was situated in the city of Bosra.¹⁶⁶

Yâqût describes this monastery as "great" and its architecture as "wonderful." It shared with the church of Najrân its character as a votive shrine, but he does not explicitly say that Muslims also made their vows at it, as they did at that of Najrân. On the other hand, he states that this was the monastery which Muḥammad visited and where he met the monk Bahîra.

These two edifices connected with Najrân, i.e., the church and the monastery, are clearly associated with the South Arabian Najrân either directly, founded by the emigrant community in Islamic times, or indirectly, founded by their relatives, the Ghassânids, in memory of the martyrs in pre-Islamic times; the first alternative is more likely.

¹⁶³ On Syrian Najrân, see R. Dussaud, *Topographie de la Syrie antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1927), 378. What Najrân had been named in ancient times is not entirely clear. These emigrants who were settled in this locality either founded the town and named it Najrân or refounded it on the remains of an old one and christened it Najrân, just as those who emigrated to Iraq settled in a locality which had been called Nahr-Abân and called it al-Najrânîya; see Yâqût, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), IV, 758. In this connection note that Yâqût refers also to a Najrân in Baḥrayn (not the island but the region) without expatiating on it (*ibid.*). It is thus possible that the Najrânite diaspora extended also to the Persian Gulf area.

¹⁶⁴ Yâqût, *op. cit.*, IV, 758.

¹⁶⁵ It cannot be entirely ruled out that the Ghassânids built the church in honor of the martyrs of Najrân, sometime in the sixth century.

¹⁶⁶ Yâqût, *op. cit.*, II, 704.

In addition to these two edifices in Najrân and Bosra, some other localities in Syria should be noted as possible sites associated with the Najrânites. There is, first, al-Jawâbî, which according to Bakrî was the settlement of al-Ḥārith ibn Kaʿb, the Ḥārithids of Najrân.¹⁶⁷ It is practically certain that the community which preferred to emigrate rather than give up its faith must have erected a memorial at its new home over the translated relics of their martyrs.

Second, Dayr Kaʿb (the Monastery of Kaʿb), mentioned by Bakrî,¹⁶⁸ could be a foundation of the Ḥārithids of Najrân.¹⁶⁹ The name of the Najrânite saint was Ḥārith, not Kaʿb, but his patronymic was "son of Kaʿb," and it is possible that the Kaʿb after whom the *dayr* was named may be the saint's father, who also might have figured in the history of Christianity in South Arabia.¹⁷⁰ The *dayr* may also have been named after Ḥārith himself, son of Kaʿb, the *Ḥārith* dropping out of use, while *Kaʿb* has survived. *Kaʿb* in its diminutive form, *Kuʿayb*, is associated with a statue in the Qalīs, built by Abraha, and this could suggest that Kaʿb may have been a South Arabian figure after whom the *dayr* in Syria was named.¹⁷¹

Many places and localities in Syria bear the name Ḥārith either singly or in combination with some such word as the Arabic *tall*. Sometimes these localities carry the name *Ḥārith* in the dual, *Ḥārithayn*. In many cases, perhaps in most cases, the name commemorates the famous Ghassânid king, al-Ḥārith, son of Jabala, but it is not unlikely that some of these localities commemorate the famous Ḥārith of Najrân, St. Arethas, a relative and a contemporary of his namesake, the Ghassânid king. It is perfectly possible that some emigrants of Najrân carried to Syria the relics of Ḥārith, just as others carried the relics of Ruhayma to Iraq. Over his relics some edifice would have been constructed. In the case of Ḥārithayn, the name in the dual may commemorate two royal Ghassânid figures, but it may also commemorate the Najrânite saint and the Ghassânid king, just as two famous saints of Syria were commemorated together, SS. Sergius and Bacchus.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Bakrî, *loc. cit.*

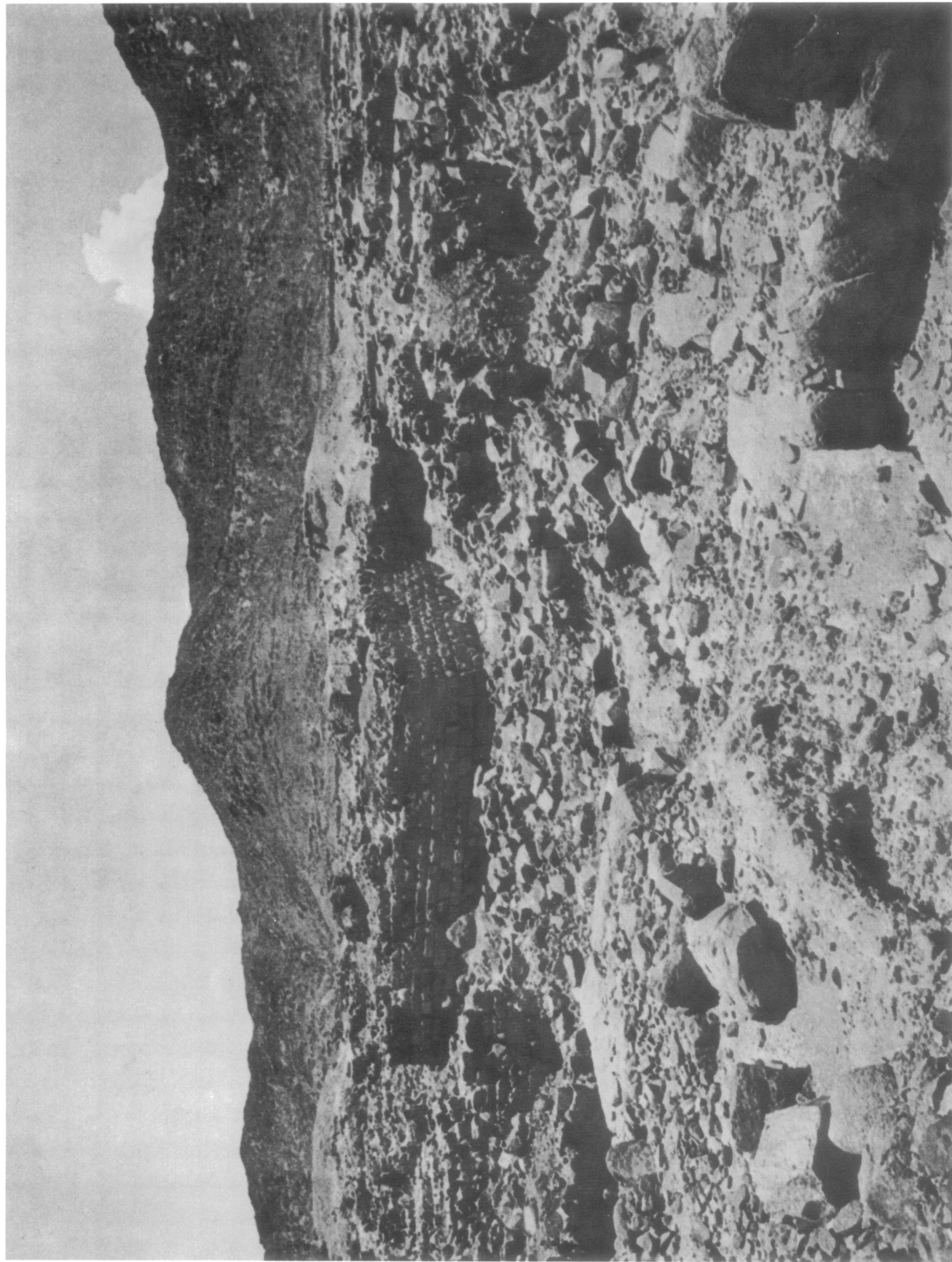
¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 381.

¹⁶⁹ In the list of Ghassânid kings, the name Kaʿb appears in Yaʿqûbî, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 123), I, 207, who identifies him with the more famous Ghassânid king, Jafna. But there is no reference in the list of structures attributed to the Ghassânids to a *dayr*, built by this Ghassânid either under the name of Kaʿb or Jafna; see Iṣfahânî, *Târikh* (*supra*, note 34), 98–104. There was a monastery of the same name, Dayr Kaʿb, located not far from Qâdisiyya to the south of Ḥîra in Iraq. If the two monasteries were named after the same person, then Kaʿb could possibly have belonged to the Najrânites or the Ghassânids since both communities were represented in either half of the Fertile Crescent; for Dayr Kaʿb near Qâdisiyya, see Dînawarî, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 114), 123, 166.

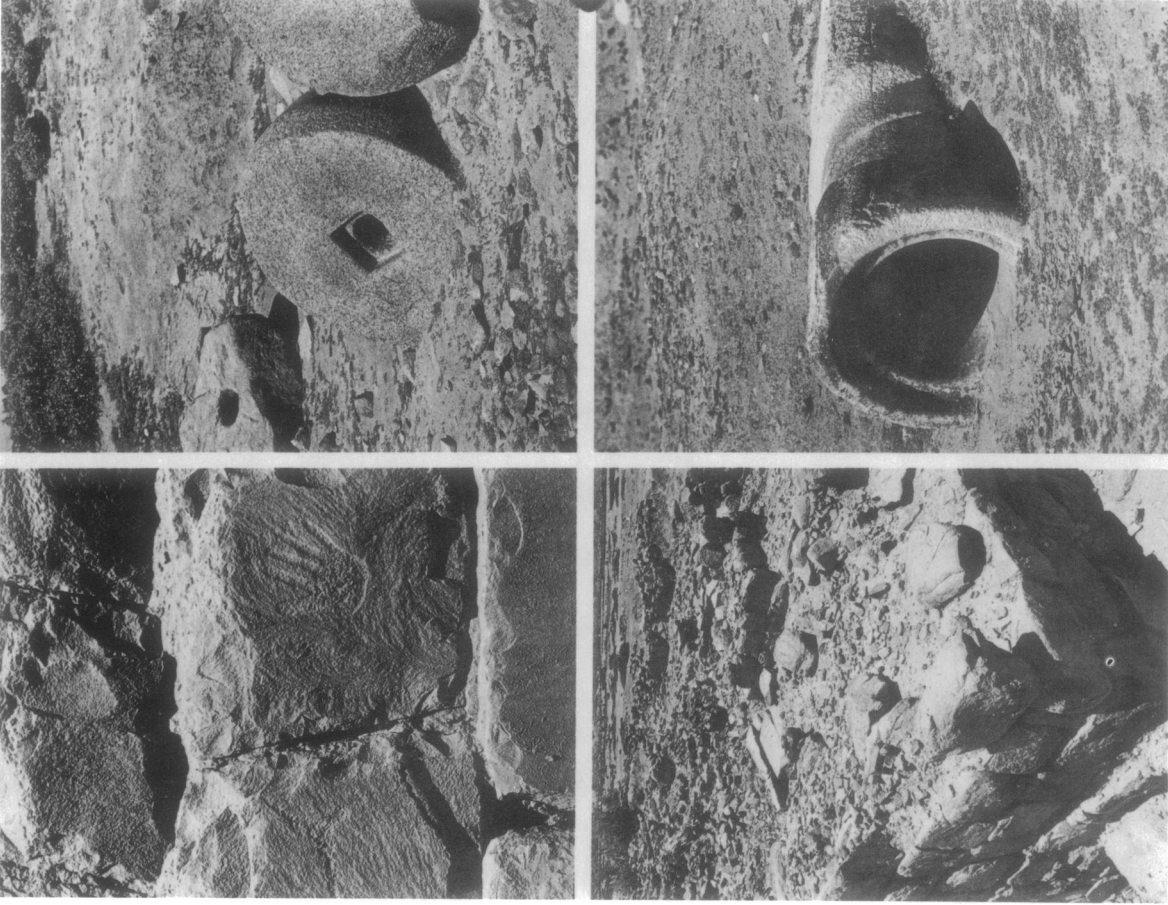
¹⁷⁰ It is of interest to note the existence of a well called biʿr Kaʿb in the vicinity of Ukhdûd. See Philby, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 126), 253.

¹⁷¹ For the statue Kuʿayb in al-Qalīs, see *infra*, pp. 82–83.

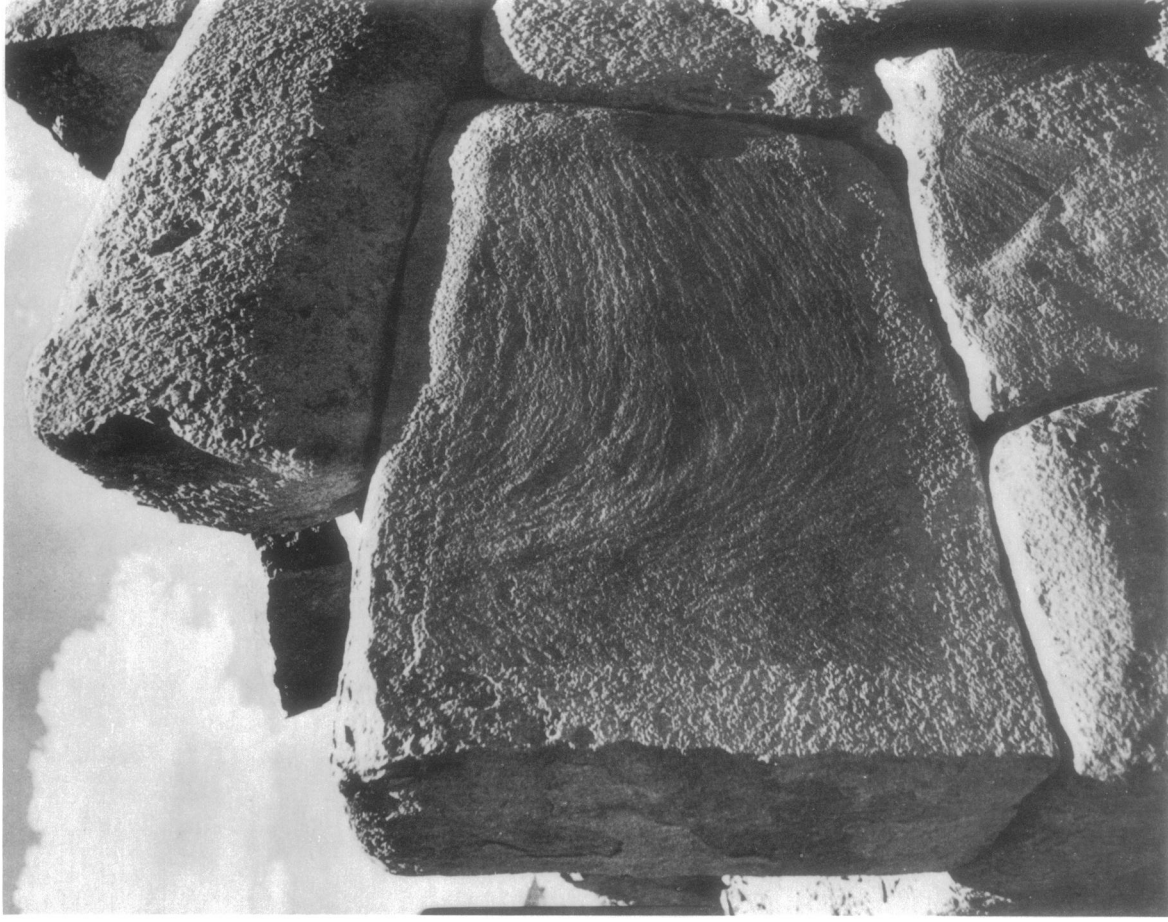
¹⁷² The Ghassânid king had much in common with the Najrânite saint, his older contemporary: they were related; they had the same name; they were military and political figures, the one king and the other *sayyid*; and they played a decisive role in the history of the Christian Church in Syria and South Arabia respectively. It would not have been incongruous, therefore, to commemorate them together.



1. The Ruins of Najrán



2.



3.

The Ruins of Najrán

III. ṢAN'Ā'

The famous church that Abraha built, al-Qalīs (eccelesia), cannot be entirely left out in this treatment of the religious structures associated with Najrân. Of all the Christian edifices of South Arabia, it is the al-Qalīs that is the most celebrated, and what is more, it is the one church that is described in great detail, a matter of considerable importance to the art historian. Al-Qalīs deserves a special and detailed treatment, as does the religious policy of Abraha. In the context of Christian edifices associated with Najrân, and mentioned in the *Vita*, only a few relevant remarks will be made.

The accounts of the Arab historians are unfortunately attended by some uncertainties concerning al-Qalīs. The erection of this church at Ṣan'ā', a city which had had no association with Christianity or the martyrdoms, raises the question whether it was really in Ṣan'ā' that Abraha built his famous al-Qalīs or in some other city, Zafâr, the capital,¹⁷³ or even Najrân. The case for Najrân is strong, since Abraha designed the church to function as an object of pilgrimage as well as a place of worship, and since Najrân was the city of martyrs, unrivaled as a place of pilgrimage. That the famous al-Qalīs might have been built elsewhere than at Ṣan'ā' may also derive some support from statements in the sources concerning Ṣan'ā' itself. Yâqût has preserved a tradition to the effect that Islamic Ṣan'ā' was formerly Zafâr,¹⁷⁴ while Dînawarî states that it was in ancient times called Damâr.¹⁷⁵ What is important in this context is not whether these statements are true or false regarding Ṣan'ā' in ancient times, but that the medieval writers had their doubts about Abraha's capital, doubts which justify considering the alternatives just explored.

On the other hand, there is much to be said for the association of al-Qalīs with Ṣan'ā'.¹⁷⁶ Abraha, a usurper, naturally wanted to establish himself in a new capital free from loyalties to the old regimes; the erection of a church such as al-Qalīs would have contributed to the strengthening of his position, especially in a country recently converted to Christianity, the scene of martyrdoms earlier in the century. He could have translated some relics of the martyrs of Najrân to this church at Ṣan'ā' and thus endowed it with the character of a *martyrium*. It is also possible that Abraha erected shrines in a number of cities,¹⁷⁷ including Najrân, where he might have built entirely new edifices or enlarged and beautified those already existing, such as the famous *martyrium*, as a place of pilgrimage for the Arabs. Later, the sources combined

¹⁷³ Thus, al-Qalīs. could answer to the church in Zafâr which the *Martyrium Arethae* (sec. 38) describes as the "Great Church"; its further description as τὴν οὖσαν νῦν ἀγιωτάτην ἐκκλησίαν is also relevant in this context, since the hagiographer, writing in the second half of the sixth century, was a contemporary of Abraha.

¹⁷⁴ Yâqût, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), III, 577.

¹⁷⁵ Dînawarî, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 114), 62.

¹⁷⁶ The accounts of the razing of the edifice in early 'Abbâsid times, described in the sources, cannot be dismissed lightly (*infra*, p. 82). Furthermore, there is the testimony of modern witnesses to Christian remains in Ṣan'ā', for which see C. Rathjens, *Sabaeica* (Hamburg, 1953), I, 40.

¹⁷⁷ His famous dam inscription testifies to his presence in Ma'rib for the consecration of a church: *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* (*supra*, note 81), no. 541 line 66.

the activities, carried out in Ṣan'â', in Najrân, and elsewhere, and presented them as though they had all taken place in one city, Ṣan'â'.

Advances in solving these problems can be made only through additional archeological evidence. But even with the present state of uncertainty concerning both al-Qalîs and its builder, Abraha, certain facts emerge from the literary sources which bear on the martyrs of Najrân.

It is clear from the accounts which describe al-Qalîs that it was a place of pilgrimage, a fact confirmed by one of its striking architectural features, namely, the dome, which immediately suggests a *martyrium*. In his account of al-Qalîs, Azraqî, the main source, refers to two statues for which al-Qalîs was famous, a reference of particular interest regarding the martyrs of Najrân. Azraqî's account is as follows. "Under the dome (*al-Qubba*) or in the sanctuary (*al-Bayt*), there was a piece of Indian oak (*sâj*), carved (*manqûsha*), sixty cubits long, called Ku'ayb; and there was another piece of Indian oak, equal to the first in length, which was called Ku'ayb's wife; and they considered the two as a source of blessing for them in pre-Islamic times."¹⁷⁸ The same author also describes the subsequent fortunes of Ku'ayb and Ku'ayb's wife. He states that the governor of Yaman during the caliphate of the 'Abbâsid, al-Manṣûr, considered pulling down al-Qalîs, but was deterred by the hold the two statues had on the pre-Islamic Arabs and by the blessings they provided, until he was finally persuaded to do so by the son of Wahb ibn-Munabbih and a Jewish scholar from Ṣan'â'. After destroying the structure, he attached chains to the two figures, but the people were afraid to pull them from the walls; so he hitched oxen to the chains and, with the people helping, the two figures were hauled outside the city walls. When, however, an Iraqi merchant bought the two figures and altered them for the purpose of putting them to some other use, his hands were cut off, and the people said that evil befell him because he had bought Ku'ayb.¹⁷⁹

From the preceding account, a number of points are quite clear. The two pieces of Indian oak are clearly wooden statues in honor of two saints.¹⁸⁰ The statues hold a central position in al-Qalîs, architecturally and functionally; located under the dome, they are the source of blessings for worshipers, and designate al-Qalîs as a place of pilgrimage, which was its most important function in Abraha's religious policy.

South Arabia emerged in the sixth century as a country of martyrs; al-Qalîs, which functioned as a place of pilgrimage, would most certainly have enshrined the relics of some important martyrs. It is only natural to think of the two famous martyrs of Najrân, Ḥārith and Ruhayma, whose relics may have been those over which the dome of al-Qalîs was built, whether that church was erected in Ṣan'â' or in some other city. There is a striking simi-

¹⁷⁸ Azraqî, *Akhbâr Makka*, ed. R. Maḥas (Cairo, 1965), I, 139.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 140-41.

¹⁸⁰ The sources usually confuse the function of statues with that of idols. Yâqût calls the two statues (Ṣanaman) two idols (*op. cit.* [*supra*, note 118], IV, 172). The name of Ku'ayb appears as Ku'ayt in Yâqût; the correct orthography is Ku'ayb, as given by Azraqî upon whom later descriptions of al-Qalîs, including Yâqût's, depend.

larity between the name of the statue, Ku'ayb, and the patronymic of the main martyr of Najrân, Ḥārith, son of Ka'b.

Ku'ayb could be a martyr or a saint who belonged to the family of Ḥārith whose father was called Ka'b.¹⁸¹ Dayr Ka'b in Syria suggests the existence of a religious figure, Ka'b, to whom the monastery was dedicated. Alternatively, *Ku'ayb* could stand for Ḥārith himself, the famous martyr of Najrân. The full name, Ḥārith ibn Ka'b, might have proved cumbersome; so the first part of it was dropped while the second remained. The grammatical pattern of the name could also support this alternative. The pattern expresses the diminutive. Ku'ayb could, therefore, easily mean "little Ka'b," denoting Ḥārith himself as the son of Ka'b, "the little Ka'b," a usage to which Jabala and Jubayla among the Ghassânids could possibly afford a parallel.

The other statue, called Ku'ayb's wife, may also indicate some connection with Najrân. A statue erected in honor of a woman immediately brings to mind Ruhayma, the principal woman martyr of Najrân to whom, as we have seen, the memorial tomb at al-Ruhayma in Iraq may have been built. What has been said about the possibility of the translation of her relics to Iraq applies also in this discussion. Indeed, it is rather strange that she was not venerated under her own name, as Ḥārith was. Al-Ruhayma, the village in Iraq, however, suggests that perhaps she was so honored by her own people, and this reference to Ku'ayb's wife in al-Qalīs supports this view. That she is called Ku'ayb's wife should not pose a problem. Such mistakes are common in accounts of this kind; the *Martyrium Arethae* itself has committed the same error as did one of the letters of Simeon, when both referred to Ruhayma as Arethas' wife, an error corrected in *Letter G* of Simeon and in the *Book*.¹⁸²

It does not seem impossible, therefore, that these two statues at al-Qalīs were put up in honor of Arethas and Ruhayma, some of whose relics might have gone through a *translatio* and a second *depositio* in a church which Abraha built somewhere in South Arabia and which he called al-Qalīs.

IV. THE TOWN OF ḤAḌRAMAWT

Ḥaḍramawt is considered a holy land.¹⁸³ Unlike the other holy places of the Muslim world, the sanctity of this region is not easy to explain in purely Islamic terms.¹⁸⁴ Ḥaḍramawt's holiness, however, may become more intelligible when it is set against the backdrop of its pre-Islamic past, a period during which it did in fact become a holy land, sanctified by the blood and relics of its sixth-century martyrs. This sanctity seems to antedate even the events of the sixth century, since ecclesiastical legend associates Ḥaḍramawt with the Three Magi,

¹⁸¹ For Ka'b, see *supra*, notes 169, 170.

¹⁸² See references in Moberg's introduction to the *Book*, lix.

¹⁸³ For Ḥaḍramawt, see Van der Meulen and von Wissmann, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 84); the relevant sections of von Wissmann, *Geschichte* (*supra*, note 66), and *Western Arabia and the Red Sea*, The Geographical Handbook Series (Oxford, 1946), may also be consulted. This work and von Wissmann's *Geschichte* have some very good photographs of the towns of Ḥaḍramawt.

¹⁸⁴ E.g., the region of Najaf and Karbalā' in Iraq, places which have become holy for the Shī'ites because of well-known reasons connected with the death of the Caliph 'Alī and his son al-Ḥusayn.

who were said to have journeyed thither after the Adoration, and whose bones, found at *Sessania Adrumetorum* in the fourth century, were translated thence to Constantinople, and from there to Milan, before they found their final resting place in the Cathedral of Cologne.

It cannot be altogether accidental that Qabr Hûd is traditionally located in Ḥaḍramawt, probably the most important shrine in Arabia after Mecca and Medina, and the object of pilgrimage for Muslims. Hûd's religious affiliation is not entirely clear, but he certainly belongs to the pre-Islamic or pre-Muḥammadan past. He may or may not have been buried in Ḥaḍramawt, but of significance is his association by tradition with Ḥaḍramawt,¹⁸⁵ where his remains are said to rest and whither the pilgrims came. This confirms that the soil of Ḥaḍramawt was considered holy, associated with shrines and pilgrimages, as in fact it was in the sixth century, owing to the martyrdoms, recorded both in the *Book* and in *Letter G* of Simeon.¹⁸⁶

Christian Ḥaḍramawt has survived in the consciousness of its people to the present day through their local traditions which have been noted by modern travelers to the country.¹⁸⁷ This is the more remarkable because South Arabia was one of the first countries to be conquered by Islam and to experience thorough Islamization, losing in the process all vestiges of its Christian past.

The Arabic sources have few and faint echoes of this distant Christian past, mostly indirect. Such as they are, they need to be examined in connection with the "town of Ḥaḍramawt."

The phrase "the town (city) of Ḥaḍramawt" has been discussed in connection with the problem of identifying the "Akana" in the *Vita*.¹⁸⁸ Yâqût uses the term in describing two of the cities of Ḥaḍramawt, namely, Tarîm and Shibâm.¹⁸⁹ There is no evidence available for the pre-Islamic Christian past of Shibâm, but at the time of Hamdânî it was a city of thirty mosques.¹⁹⁰ Tarîm is, therefore, the more important of the two cities of Ḥaḍramawt for this discussion of the Christian past.¹⁹¹

Tarîm, a religious center, is the seat of an ancient Muslim academy and is said to have three hundred mosques. It can be argued that its religious character goes back to pre-Islamic times, an assertion supported by some evidence.

¹⁸⁵ For the pre-Islamic prophets of Ḥaḍramawt of whom Hûd, the Koranic figure, is the most important, see R. B. Sergeant, "Hûd and the Pre-Islamic Prophets of Ḥaḍramawt," *Le Muséon*, 67 (1954), 121-79; see also Van der Meulen and von Wissmann, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 84), 158-62. The present discussion of Christianity in Ḥaḍramawt and South Arabia in general is of considerable relevance to the problem of Arabian pre-Muḥammadan prophets in the *Qur'ân*. In this connection, Hamdânî's account of the Holy Mountains (*al-jibâl al-muqadassa*) and of the Places of Worship (*al-masâjid*) of pre-Islamic South Arabia deserves a close examination; see Hamdânî, *Iḥlâl* (*supra*, note 59), 68, 121, and accompanying notes.

¹⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that, after Najrân, Ḥaḍramawt was the most important Christian center in South Arabia, as Simeon's *Letter G* has made clear; see *Martyrs*, 45.

¹⁸⁷ See C. F. Beckingham and R. B. Sergeant, "A Journey by Two Jesuits from Dhufâr to Ṣan'â' in 1950," *The Geographical Journal* (London, 1950), 197 and note 3.

¹⁸⁸ See *supra*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁸⁹ Yâqût, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 118), I, 846; II, 249.

¹⁹⁰ Hamdânî, *Ṣifat* (*supra*, note 70), 172.

¹⁹¹ For Tarîm, see Van der Meulen and von Wissmann, *op. cit.* (*supra*, note 84), 128-42. In this connection note that Yâqût (*op. cit.*, III, 323) does not apply the phrase "the town of Ḥaḍramawt" to Shabwa. Moberg (*Book*, liii), influenced by Pliny's descriptions of the town, thought Shabwa could be Ḥaḍramawt.

First, the Qur'anic figure, Hûd, is assigned by later authors to Ḥaḍramawt. Al-Harawî speaks of his tomb as being in the "town of Ḥaḍramawt," which is probably Tarîm, since the tomb of Hûd is to the east of the city.¹⁹² But Hûd in the *Qur'ân* is a pre-Muḥammadan prophet; he must, therefore, have been a religious figure who represented a pre-Islamic biblical monotheistic tradition.

A much more important figure than Hûd is Masjid Nabî Allâh Jarjîs, since a mosque was built in his honor despite his undoubted affiliation with Christianity.¹⁹³ This mosque, which carries the name of a Christian saint, solitary and single as it is, does throw light on many aspects of the religious history of the region.

The Mosque of Jarjîs illustrates a familiar spectacle in the medieval Near East, namely, the transformation of a Christian sanctuary into a Muslim mosque,¹⁹⁴ the church-turned-mosque edifice. But this church-mosque is distinguished from others of its kind because, after its transformation, it retained the name of the Christian figure with whom it had been associated. Moreover, it is a different case from that of the church-mosque of 'Abdullâh at Najrân, which also retained its association with a Christian figure. This 'Abdullâh was an Arab, possibly a native of Najrân, whose memory survived among his fellow Najrânites even after some of them converted to Islam. But Jarjîs, as the name indicates, was probably not a native of Ḥaḍramawt, and yet he continued to be venerated in that country. The Mosque of Jarjîs, therefore, is truly more significant than that of 'Abdullâh in Najrân, as a symbol reflecting a Christian-Muslim symbiosis in South Arabia and the Christian character of Tarîm in pre-Islamic times. How many of the mosques of Ḥaḍramawt belong to this type is difficult to tell, since the Christian names have vanished except in the cases of 'Abdullâh and Jarjîs.¹⁹⁵ There were undoubtedly more than two, since the practice of transforming churches into mosques was common, an easy transition because both Islam and Christianity belong to the same biblical monotheistic tradition which viewed these structures as Houses of the Lord.

It remains to discuss the name *Jarjîs*. Of the two suggestions offered to identify Jarjîs, namely, that he is either St. Sergius or the presbyter Sergius,

¹⁹² Al-Harawî, ed. and trans. J. Sourdell-Thomine, *Kitâb al-Ishârat ilâ Ma'rifat al-Ziyârât*, I, Text (Damascus, 1953); II, Translation (Damascus, 1957); for the reference to the "town of Ḥaḍramawt," see I, 97; II, 220–21 note 8. The Syriac sources have now revealed that the phrase "town of Ḥaḍramawt" goes back at least as far as the sixth century, since it is used in the *Book* and *Letter G* of Simeon to describe the place where the persecutions took place.

¹⁹³ See R. B. Sergeant, "Saint Sergius," *BSOAS*, 19 (1957), 574–75.

¹⁹⁴ Yâqût is of some relevance in this connection. He states on the authority of 'Umâra al-Yamani that a certain Ḥusayn, a Nubian slave, who was *wazîr* in Yaman for thirty years, was engaged in building mosques all the way from Ḥaḍramawt to Mecca and to Aden (*op. cit.* [*supra*, note 118], III, 249). Such an intensive mosque-building activity could have resulted in transforming some Christian sanctuaries or their remains into Muslim mosques. The contribution of Ḥusayn to the history of mosques in Yaman is comparable to that of another African, Abraha himself, the builder of churches in South Arabia, who according to Procopius had been a slave at the African port of Adulis.

¹⁹⁵ In this connection the accounts of modern travelers, such as Glazer and Rathjens, are valuable. They have noted distinctive Christian remains, some of which have been built into Muslim mosques, e.g., at San'â' and at Yarîm, near Ḥafâr, for which see *supra*, note 176; and Ryckmans, "Le christianisme" (*supra*, note 36), 440 note 137, 438 note 112.

mentioned in the *Book*, the first suggestion is more likely to be true.¹⁹⁶ The presbyter's ministry was not in Ḥaḍramawt and he was martyred at Najrân. Moreover, *Letter G* of Simeon has a list of the martyrs of Ḥaḍramawt, but the name Sergius, or one similar to it, does not appear in this list.¹⁹⁷ The case for St. Sergius, on the other hand, is strong. He was a major saint in Syria, venerated by the Arabs, and his cult could have migrated from Syria to South Arabia, particularly in view of the close relations which obtained between the Ghassânids¹⁹⁸ of Syria and the Najrânites. In addition to St. Sergius, one may suggest St. George whose name phonetically is nearer to Jarjîs than Sergius; in fact, it is one of the forms of *George* in Arabic. St. George was well known throughout the Near East, and his *cultus* might have reached Ḥaḍramawt from the north, the Fertile Crescent, or from the west, Ethiopia, where he was a major saint. Both St. Sergius and St. George are remembered in the Near East, and many churches and monasteries, well-known to Arab authors (e.g., *Shâbush-ti*),¹⁹⁹ are dedicated to them. In support of St. George, however, is the fact that in Mawṣil, Iraq, there is a *mashhad*, a tomb-sanctuary, called *Mashhad Jirjîs*,²⁰⁰ which, like Masjid Jarjîs in Tarîm, is a Muslim sanctuary. Its existence suggests that the South Arabian sanctuary in Tarîm is in memory of the same saint whose veneration continued after the advent of Islam.

The arguments advanced in favor of either St. Sergius or St. George are only *a priori*, and this type of argument in the present context is not very convincing. The discussion of the relevant parts of the *Vita* in the preceding chapter calls for a final observation on the problem of identifying Jarjîs, namely, that it is not altogether impossible that the personage involved here is St. Gregentius. It has been noted already that, while Sergius is the spoken form, Jarjîs is the written one. This brings it closer on phonetic grounds to Gregentius than to Sergius. While there is no evidence whatever that St. Sergius or St. George was in fact venerated in South Arabia or Ḥaḍramawt, St. Gregentius, according to the *Vita*, not only was the archbishop of South Arabia but actually journeyed to Ḥaḍramawt, visited its towns, and consecrat-

¹⁹⁶ In his note on St. Sergius, the author states that Jarjîs is pronounced colloquially as Sarjîs; see Sergeant, "Saint Sergius," 574.

¹⁹⁷ Another indication that the Jarjîs of this memorial mosque in Tarîm was not one of the martyrs of Ḥaḍramawt during the persecutions of the sixth century. He is, therefore, more likely to have hailed not from Ḥaḍramawt but from some other region, sometime before or after these persecutions.

¹⁹⁸ See J. Sauvaget, "Les Ghassanides et Sergiopolis," *Le Muséon*, 52 (1939), 115-30.

¹⁹⁹ *Op. cit.*, 463.

²⁰⁰ See Ibn-Jubayr, *Rihla*, ed. W. Wright, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series (Leiden, 1907), 236; see also the English translation by R. Broadhurst, *The Travels of Ibn-Jubayr* (London, 1952), 244-45. For a detailed account of Jirjîs in the Arabic tradition, see Ṭabarî, *Târîkh*, ed. M. Ibrâhîm (Cairo, 1961), II, 24-36, esp. 24, for reference to his association with Mawṣil. In the Islamic tradition St. George is often identified or confused with Elijah, and this may partly explain why he was "promoted" from saint to prophet.

In spite of the strong case resting upon analogy which can be made for St. George as the figure commemorated by the *masjid* in Tarîm, this should not be pressed too far. Al-Nabî Jirjîs is certainly venerated by Muslims, but the existence of the *mashhad* in Mawṣil may reflect the persistence of a local tradition on his martyrdom or burial (partial to Mawṣil, not to Lydda), rather than the strength of Muslim sentiment toward him, which was so powerful as to have reached Ḥaḍramawt and which thus could conceivably explain the existence of the *masjid* in Tarîm.

ed its churches. In view of this, it is not altogether fanciful to suggest that the saint may have been a historical personage after all, a man remembered as a *nabî* in the consciousness of South Arabia despite the thorough Islamization of the region.²⁰¹

In addition to these three, presbyter Sergius, St. Sergius, and St. Gregentius, there is a fourth who deserves to be mentioned in connection with Masjid Sarjîs, namely, bishop Sergius, the sixth-century ecclesiastic who, according to Michael the Syrian, was sent to South Arabia to spread the Phantasiast doctrine in those regions.²⁰² It is noteworthy not only that he stayed in the country three years during which he ordained priests, but also that he died in South Arabia. Of the four, he may turn out to be the most important for solving the problem posed by the Christian name of the Islamic *masjid* in Tarîm.

²⁰¹ My views on St. Gregentius and the *Corpus Gregentianum* have already been expressed (*supra*, pp. 30–37), but the name given to the mosque in South Arabia, Masjid Jarjîs, is tantalizing and should be taken into account in all fairness to the fundamentalists who hold that Gregentius was a historical personage. The bishop of South Arabia after the Ethiopian conquest was certainly not Orthodox and does not answer to the description given of Gregentius in the *Vita*. However, it is possible that an Orthodox bishop or archbishop by the name of Gregentius or a similar name, such as George or Gregory, was active in South Arabia; but this possibility could be entertained only for the later period, during the reign of Abraha when, according to some Sabaicists, the king went over to the Chalcedonian position. The author of the *Vita*, writing late in the sixth century and from an Orthodox viewpoint, could thus have antedated the episcopate of Gregentius to the first half of the century, crediting him with the consecration of the churches mentioned in the *Vita*, in order to give the impression that South Arabia had been Orthodox since the Ethiopian conquest.

²⁰² See F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, *Christentum am Roten Meer* (Berlin, 1973), II, 348.

APPENDIX I

ON THE MARTYRS OF NAJRÂN

Καέντα καὶ ριφέντα, *Martyrium Arethae* (sec. 38) — This phrase, used in the *Martyrium Arethae* to describe the bodies of the martyrs, needs to be examined. It is clear from the accounts of the *Book* and the *Martyrium Arethae* itself that, though most of the martyrs were killed within the city walls, all of them, with the exception of St. Arethas, were buried outside the city. The phrase above, however, describes both the passion (by burning) and the burial of the martyrs as happening in the same place, where Caleb built the *martyrium*. The description involves a contradiction which cannot be resolved by interpreting ριφέντα as “thrown into” the church, since it does not precede but follows καέντα and since the *Martyrium Arethae* uses another term for “throwing into” the church, i.e., ἐμβολεῖν, as in section 6 line 4. ‘Ριφέντα must mean here what it does earlier in section 20 line 6, where it describes the throwing of the martyrs’ severed heads, translated in the Latin version as *projicere* as accurately as ἐμβολεῖν was translated *injicere*.

The statement in the *Martyrium Arethae* then may refer to an edifice built on the spot where the martyrs were killed either by burning, which would be the site of the church of Najrân burnt by Yûsuf, or by the sword, which would be another site for the other group of martyrs not burnt in the church; or an edifice built on the spot where the martyrs were buried outside the walls. It is interesting to note that the *Martyrium Arethae* states that all the various martyrs were buried outside the city in the same spot (*Martyrium Arethae*, sec. 20). This possibility is consonant with some statements in the Arabic sources which speak of the *Qubba* (the Dome) as having been near a river outside Najrân; see Işfahânî, *Aghânî*, XII, 7. As a third possibility, the *Martyrium Arethae* may have combined a description of two *martyria*, one built on the site of the passion inside the walls and another built on the site of the *depositio* outside them. It is impossible to determine from the evidence of the *Martyrium Arethae* alone what the martyrologist had in mind, particularly since Najrân was probably full of *martyria* built upon many different burial sites both inside and outside the walls. The use of the term καέντα (burnt) may indicate that he was thinking primarily of the martyrs who died in the church of Najrân, since the manner of their martyrdom was by flame, since the priests were included, and since a Christian church was also burnt down in the process. Because this particular group of martyrs was burnt by fire and not killed by the sword, their remains would have been reduced to ashes, and so there was presumably no need to bury them. In this case, the memorial edifice commemorating them would have been one erected on the site of their passion, unlike the edifices honoring other martyrs which could have been built on the site of either their passion or their burial or both.

APPENDIX II

ON THE ANONYMOUS BISHOP OF SOUTH ARABIA

A. The *Book* seems to be silent on the question of the consecration and dispatch of this bishop. It is possible that this information was in a section of the *Book* no longer extant since those chapters dealing with Ethiopia are more mutilated than the *Himyaritica*, suggesting that this bishop may have been mentioned somewhere in the mutilated sections. It is not impossible that the bishop may have been meant in the phrase "the priests who were with him" (*Book*, 54b). Thus, the evidence of the *Book* is ambivalent and does not necessarily conflict with the view that South Arabia did indeed receive a bishop shortly after the Ethiopian occupation.

The discussion of the consecration of a bishop in Alexandria and his dispatch to South Arabia has been based upon the accounts of the *Martyrium Arethae* and the amplification of the *Vita*. These accounts, however, receive considerable support from a reliable and independent Syriac source. The account of the so-called *Chronicle of Dionysius Tell-Mahre* (hereafter *Pseudo-Dionysius*), which is based upon the *History of John of Ephesus*, explicitly states that a bishop was dispatched from Alexandria to Ḥimyar following the second Ethiopian invasion. The *Pseudo-Dionysius* is sometimes vague and its grammar is not always clear. But a close analysis of the passage where this report occurs shows that the one who requested the consecration and the dispatch of a bishop was not the Ḥimyarite King Abraham but the Ethiopian Negus Caleb, who is the subject of all the verbs in this passage. It was only after the death of this bishop that a clear reference to the Ḥimyarite king appears in connection with finding a successor to this bishop (see *Chronicon Anonymum*, CSCO, 104 [Paris, 1933], II, 68–69). The dispatch of a bishop to Ḥimyar is thus not in dispute. A bishop would have been required to supervise the churches of a vast region such as South Arabia. Moreover, two different sets of sources refer to an episcopal appointment: the Syriac, represented by *Pseudo-Dionysius*, and the Greek hagiographic sources, represented by the *Martyrium Arethae* and the *Vita*, to which may be added the *Chronographia of John Malalas* with its important reference to the correspondence between Caleb and Licinius, the *Augustalis* of Egypt (see Malalas, *Chronographia*, Bonn ed., 434).

The most important of all these sources regarding the bishop's appointment is, of course, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, written in the Orient by a Monophysite author to whom the affairs of South Arabia were very close; but above all, it derives from the *History of John of Ephesus* which in turn derives from the works of Simeon, including the *Book*. The ultimate derivation of *Pseudo-Dionysius* from the *Book* fortifies the suspicion, expressed above in this note, that Simeon's work most probably mentioned the dispatch of this bishop to South Arabia, although it may not have given it the prominence that it deserved. In spite of his conscientious objectivity, Simeon did not, after all, write entirely *sine ira et studio*. It is possible that he had hoped to be given the chance to supervise the ecclesiastical administration of the newly converted region

for which he had toiled so hard, a position for which his zeal, vision, and knowledge of languages admirably qualified him (*Martyrs*, 136–37). But his hopes were not fulfilled. He may also have desired to leave the Byzantine contribution to the South Arabian crusade out of the *Book*; a detailed account of Caleb's request for a bishop would have entailed telling the whole story of the correspondence, including the dispatch to the Byzantine Emperor Justin, as related by Malalas.

The account in *Pseudo-Dionysius* concerning the Ḥimyarite king's reluctance to have an episcopal successor, consecrated in Alexandria after the death of the first bishop, is valuable, since it contains some chronological indications. It clearly implies that the death of this anonymous bishop took place in the period A.D. 535–37, which witnessed the departure of the Monophysite Patriarch Theodosius from Alexandria to Constantinople and his deposition there by Patriarch Menas. This period sets a terminus for the episcopate of this anonymous bishop.

B. The identity of this bishop whom the see of St. Mark consecrated for Arabia is a well-known crux. The problem received a detailed treatment by E. Carpentier, in *ActaSS* (Octobris X), 697–98; since then it has figured in all the standard works on the subject. It is entangled with the problems of the first Ethiopian invasion and with those of St. Gregentius. In view of some new material which has come to light, mainly *Letter G* of Simeon, the following remarks are pertinent.

As Father Carpentier has pointed out, the first bishop, whom the Ethiopian king requested, and who according to *Pseudo-Dionysius* was called John Paramonarius, must have been the consecrated bishop of Ethiopia, not of Ḥimyar. In view of the possibility that Caleb was this Ethiopian king, John Paramonarius must have been Euprepus, who was the bishop of Ethiopia during this period, Euprepus being the episcopal name John assumed upon his consecration. This depends, however, upon the date of the first Ethiopian invasion; if it took place long before the second, then Euprepus could have been a bishop who succeeded John Paramonarius. It might be inferred from *Letter G* of Simeon (IX.B) that Simeon of Bêth-Arshâm knew the bishop personally or knew of him, and this might imply that perhaps Euprepus was a recently consecrated bishop hailing originally from some part of the Near East where Simeon could have met him. That John Paramonarius was consecrated the bishop of Ethiopia and not Ḥimyar is supported also by the fact that the name *John* for a bishop of the Ḥimyarites does not appear in the sources for this period, which mention only the two Pauls of Najrân, Sylvanus, and the mysterious Thomas; *John* appears only later in the century, attended by uncertainty, as the name of the bishop of Najrân who, according to the Athos manuscript of the *Vita*, was the author of that work (see *Vita*, 26).

The accounts of John Paramonarius' appointment, as related in *Pseudo-Dionysius*, recall strongly the accounts of the *Vita* regarding St. Gregentius. The name of the Byzantine emperor in the chronicle who is said to have

dispatched John Paramonarius is Justinian; this brings Paramonarius closer to Gregentius who, according to the *Vita*, was dispatched from Alexandria during the reign of Justin. But *Pseudo-Dionysius* might have confused Justinian with Anastasius during whose reign this bishop was most likely sent. It is not altogether impossible that the *Vita* supplies the name of the bishop, left anonymous in the Syriac *Pseudo-Dionysius*, and that the name of the bishop sent from Alexandria was Gregentius, made a Chalcedonian by the author of the *Vita*. The accounts of the *Leges* and the *Dialogus* on Gregentius, however, seem to reflect conditions which might have obtained in the second half rather than in the first quarter of the sixth century. Gregentius appears as an archbishop with bishops around him, a picture suggesting a later period when Christianity had made enough progress late in the sixth century to justify an ecclesiastical hierarchy of bishops under an archbishop. Perhaps most important, Gregentius does not appear as a saint in the *Ethiopic Synaxarion*. This is significant, since Ethiopia is the country which is closest to South Arabia where one would expect to find him commemorated. This suggests that he was not a Monophysite bishop, but a Chalcedonian who perhaps was requested by Abraha at a time when the latter might have adopted the Chalcedonian position (*supra*, note 19).

APPENDIX III

ON THE ITINERARY OF ST. GREGENTIUS

In describing the itinerary of Gregentius, the *Vita* (p. 62) relates that the saint reached Ἀμλέμ, the royal city of the Ethiopians, crossed the Sea of Saba, journeyed through τὸ Δαικκεὸν . . . ἄντρον, and finally reached Ζαφάρ, the royal city of the Himyarites.

For St. Gregentius, coming from Alexandria at the request of the Ethiopian negus, who at the time was in South Arabia, this was the natural itinerary to follow—a stop at the capital city of the Ethiopians, a Red Sea crossing, landing in South Arabia, and a journey to the South Arabian capital, Ζαφάρ. And yet, strangely enough, this itinerary has been considered very serious grounds for rejecting the authenticity of the *Vita*. The two toponyms, Saba and Ζαφάρ, are easy to identify, but the other two, Ἀμλέμ and τὸ Δαικκεὸν ἄντρον, have baffled students of the *Vita*. However, a close examination of these two toponyms reveals that they can be identified, once one realizes that Semitic names go through a process of mutilated transformation when they are transliterated from Syriac or Arabic into Greek; as has been indicated above, the hagiographer had at his disposal such Semitic documents in which these toponyms had appeared. He either misread them or used a Greek archetype which already contained these errors.

Ἀμλέμ: This is none other than Axum, the capital of Ethiopia. Written in Syriac or Arabic, it bears a striking resemblance to *Axum*, and erroneous

transliteration is solely responsible for transforming *Axum* to *Amlem*. Perhaps it was not clearly written in the original Syriac; such is the case in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian in a passage where it is practically certain that Axum is meant; and yet *Axum* puzzled the editor-translator so that he transliterated it rather unintelligibly as *Aksdon*, and even conjectured that it could also be a Syriac transcription of Greek ἐξ Ἰνδοῶν. See *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot (Paris, 1901), II, 183 note 11; IV, 273 B.

τὸ Δαικκέον ἄντρον: The traveler, who crosses the Red Sea and disembarks on the western coast of South Arabia, must cross that region which separates the coast from the mountains, the lowlands called Tihâma, before reaching Zafâr, the capital of the Ḥimyarites high in the mountains. In addition to Tihâma, this region is also called al-Ghawr (Hamdânî, *Ṣifat*, 58). Here dwelt the tribe of 'Akk. Thus, Tihâma was sometimes referred to as 'Akk (*ibid.*, 59) and as *sahl* 'Akk, the plain of 'Akk (*ibid.*, 268). The root of Δαικκέον, then, would seem to be the word 'Akk, transliterated into Greek. This explanation should restore confidence in the accuracy of the itinerary, since Gregentius would, indeed, have had to cross the territory of 'Akk in order to reach Zafâr.

It remains to examine two other problems in the phrase τὸ Δαικκέον ἄντρον. First, there is no trace of a cave (ἄντρον) in the region of 'Akk, and, indeed, the word *cave* is suspect since it is unnatural to describe a fairly long and arduous journey from the coast to the mountains by referring to a cave as the next port of call after disembarking on the coast of South Arabia. Surely some confusion is involved in comprehending the text of the original document before it was translated into Greek. Second, the *delta* in Δαικκέον cannot be explained by simple transliteration from 'Akk; a satisfactory explanation of the phrase in its entirety must take into account both of these problems.

Both difficulties can be resolved once it is realized that the original document from which this phrase was copied must have been a Syriac source, possibly translated from an Arabic one. The following reconstruction of the process of confused transmission may be suggested. The original Arabic document spoke of *Ghawr* 'Akk (the lowland of 'Akk); the Arabic word *Ghawr* (lowland) bears a striking resemblance to *Ghar*, meaning *cave*; the Syriac translator confused the two, and translated the Arabic phrase *Ghawr* 'Akk (the lowland of 'Akk) into the Syriac *m'artâ d' 'Akk* (the cave of 'Akk). The Greek translator of the Syriac phrase could have translated it "the cave of 'Akk," but instead he chose to use the adjective formed from 'Akk, "the 'Akkite"; the Syriac phrase thus appeared in Greek as the "Akkite Cave" with the Greek adjectival suffix -εύων. In the process of translation into the Greek, the Syriac preposition *d*, which expresses the genitive relation, was not eliminated after the translator chose to render the phrase adjectivally; it crept into the adjective 'Akkite, appearing as the *delta*, the first letter in the Δαικκέον of the Greek text. The translator presumably thought it was part of the work 'Akk, perhaps encouraged by the possibility that the *alaph* of the emphatic state in the Syriac *m'artâ* had dropped out. Finally, the *iota* in Δαικκέον has to be taken with the preceding *alpha* as reflecting an attempt on

the part of the Greek translator to render the Semitic guttural "‘ayn" by a diphthong.

The foregoing analysis of the two toponyms in the *Vita* and the resolution of the difficulties involved in the two cruxes lead to the following conclusions:

First, the original document that described the itinerary of St. Gregentius from Alexandria to South Arabia was not written in Greek. The hagiographer used either a Syriac document or a Greek document translated from Syriac. The existence of a Syriac document is suggested by the *delta* in Δαικεόν. The confusion of *lowland* with *cave* could suggest an Arabic model of the Syriac document, since no relevant Syriac word lends itself to this confusion. This leads to the conclusion that possibly there was an Arabic version for the itinerary of Gregentius, just as there was for the *Martyrium Arethae* (see *Martyrs*, 181–93). Whether this version was early, even pre-Islamic, remains to be shown. The possibility, however, of a pre-Islamic Arabic version can be entertained in view of the growing evidence, which suggests that the Christian Arabs of pre-Islamic times did use Arabic for recording the extraordinary events which took place in South Arabia in the early part of the sixth century (*supra*, note 114). It would indeed be surprising if the Arabs of Najrân, who had a flourishing school of poetry in their *martyropolis* during the sixth century, left accounts of the martyrdoms entirely for others to record.

Second, the defense of the list of churches in the *Vita*, conducted in previous sections, may now be extended to Gregentius' itinerary, which had been criticized by those who challenged the authenticity of the *Vita*. *Amlem* turns out to be *Axum*, the capital of Ethiopia, and not a toponym fabricated by the imagination of the hagiographer. But the reference to Axum, a city well known to the Byzantine world, does not decisively speak for the authenticity of the itinerary; the reference to the 'Akkite Cave, however, does. This is not a toponym which the hagiographer could have lifted from the sources, since it is not attested elsewhere.* It is a very specific reference which could have been known only to one familiar with the regional geography, the one who wrote the original account of the itinerary. 'Akk is an old South Arabian tribe attested in the Sabaic inscriptions (Jamme, *op. cit.* [*supra*, note 2], 316, 340, 370), and not only in later works such as al-Hamdâni's *Ṣifat*. The original phrase in the Syriac or Arabic, *Ghawr 'Akk* (the lowland of 'Akk), could be considered even more specific than *Tihâma*, the better-known name in the inscriptions for the western lowlands of South Arabia; it indicates that Gregentius traversed that particular part of Tihâma that was inhabited by the tribe of 'Akk; consequently, the phrase gives more precision to the course of his Arabian itinerary before he reached Zafâr. The reference to 'Akk takes its place alongside the

* The tribe, 'Akk, may have been mentioned by Ptolemy and Uranius. In the *Vita*, however, more is involved than reference to a tribe: a toponym, "the 'Akkite Cave"; a spelling, the two *kappas* of which accurately reproduce the two *kafs* of Arabic; and the phrase, "the 'Akkite Cave," which can be explained only by the assumption that the original documents from which the Greek *Vita* derived were Semitic in which the errors noted above in the text were conceivable; all of this precludes Ptolemy or Uranius as a source. On the various Greek forms Ἀγχίται, Ἀχόμενοι, Ἀχόμεαι, Ἀκχηνόι identified with 'Akk by O. Blau, see *ZDMG*, 22 (1868), 656; *ibid.*, 23 (1869), 564 note 11.

reference to Dana in the list of churches as a specific reference which argues for the authenticity of this part of the *Vita*.

Thus, the very toponyms that have been used to prove the spuriousness of the *Vita* actually speak for its authenticity. Their very corruption in the Greek text has made it possible to detect a Syriac original of the Greek *Vita*, or at least of Gregentius' itinerary, and, what is more, possibly an Arabic source from which the Syriac derives.